

Sūrah An-Naml

(The Ant)

Sūrah An-Naml was revealed in Makkah and it has 93 Verses and 7 sections

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 6

طَس ت تِلْكَ اَيُّ الْقُرْآنِ وَكِتَابٍ مُبِينٍ ﴿١﴾ هُدًى وَبُشْرَى
لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٢﴾ الَّذِينَ يُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَهُمْ
بِالْآخِرَةِ هُمْ يُوقِنُونَ ﴿٣﴾ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ زِينًا لَهُمْ
أَعْمَالُهُمْ فَهُمْ يَعْمَهُونَ ﴿٤﴾ أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ لَهُمْ سُوءُ الْعَذَابِ وَهُمْ
فِي الْآخِرَةِ هُمُ الْآخَسِرُونَ ﴿٥﴾ وَأَنَّكَ لَتَلَقَّى الْقُرْآنَ مِنْ لَدُنْ
حَكِيمٍ عَلِيمٍ ﴿٦﴾

Tā, Sīn. These are the verses of the Qur'ān and an enlightening book, [1] to give guidance and good news to the believers [2] who establish Ṣalāh and pay Zakāh and who have faith in the Hereafter. [3] As for those who do not believe in the Hereafter, We have made their deeds adorned in their sight. So they are wandering astray. [4] Those are the the people who deserve the worst punishment and who are the worst losers in the Hereafter. [5] And surely you are being given the Qur'ān by a wise, knowledgeable Being. [6]

Commentary

زَيْنًا لَهُمْ أَعْمَالُهُمْ (We have made their deeds adorned in their sight - 27:4) It means that those who do not believe in the Hereafter We have made their bad actions look adorned in their sight. Therefore they feel good about them and remain enthralled in depravity. Some commentators have interpreted that "their deeds" is used in this verse for good deeds. Hence meaning of the verse is that Allah had placed the good deeds before them with all their attractions. But those unjust people did not pay any attention to them, rather they remained engrossed in infidelity; hence lost their way in wilderness.

However, the first interpretation looks more appropriate and straightforward. In the first place, in the Qur'ān, the word (Zīnah) 'adornment' has been generally used for bad actions, for instance: زَيْنَ لِلنَّاسِ (It has been made attractive for people to love the desires - 3:14) زَيْنَ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا (Adorned is the present life for those who disbelieve - 2:212) زَيْنَ لِكَثِيرٍ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ (6:137). Its use for good actions is very rare, such as: وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ حَبَّبَ إِلَيْكُمُ الْإِيمَانَ وَزَيَّنَهُ فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ (But Allah has endeared to you belief, decking it fair in your hearts - 49:7). Secondly, the word أعمالهم (their deeds) used in the verse is also pointing out that bad actions are meant here and not the righteous actions.

Verses 7 - 14

إِذْ قَالَ مُوسَىٰ لَأَهْلِيهِ إِنِّي آنَسْتُ نَارًا ۖ سَائِيكُم مِّنْهَا بِخَبَرٍ أَوْ آتِيكُم بِشِهَابٍ قَبَسٍ لَّعَلَّكُمْ تَصْطَلُونَ ﴿٧﴾ فَلَمَّا جَاءَهَا نُودِيَ أَن بُورِكَ مَن فِي النَّارِ وَمَنْ حَوْلَهَا ۖ وَسُبْحَنَ اللَّهُ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٨﴾ يَمْوَسَّىٰ إِنَّهُ أَنَا اللَّهُ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿٩﴾ وَأَلْقَىٰ عَصَاكَ ۖ فَلَمَّا رَاها تَهْتَزُّ كَأَنَّهَا جَانٌّ وَلَّىٰ مُدَبِّرًا لَّمْ يَعْقِبْ ۖ يَمْوَسَّىٰ لَا تَخَفْ ۚ إِنِّي لَا يَخَافُ لَدَى الْمَرْسُلُونَ ﴿١٠﴾ إِلَّا مَن ظَلَمَ ثُمَّ بَدَّلَ حُسْنًا بَعْدَ سُوءٍ فَإِنِّي غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿١١﴾ وَأَدْنَىٰ لَّكَ فِي جَنِّكَ تَخْرُجُ بَيضَاءَ مِن غَيْرِ سُوءٍ ۚ فِي تِسْعِ آيَاتٍ إِلَىٰ فِرْعَوْنَ وَقَوْمِهِ ۖ إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا قَوْمًا فَسِيقِينَ ﴿١٢﴾ فَلَمَّا جَاءَتْهُمْ آيَاتُنَا مُبْصِرَةً قَالُوا هَذَا

سِحْرٌ مُّبِينٌ ﴿١٣﴾ وَجَحَدُوا بِهَا وَاسْتَيْقَنَتْهَا أَنْفُسُهُمْ ظُلْمًا وَعُلُوًّا ط
فَانْظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُفْسِدِينَ ﴿١٤﴾

(Remember) when Mūsā said to his family, "I have noticed a fire. I shall bring to you some news from it, or bring to you a live ember, so that you may warm yourselves." [7] So when he came to it, he was called: "Blessed is the one who is in the fire and the one who is around it. And pure is Allah, the Lord of the worlds. [8] O Mūsā, the fact is that I AM Allah, the Mighty, the Wise. [9] And cast your staff down." So when he saw it moving, as if it was a snake, he retreated, turning his back and did not look behind. "O Mūsā be not scared. I am such that the messengers are not scared before Me, [10] except him who did wrong, then after (having done) evil, replaced (it) with good, then I am Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful. [11] And put your hand into your bosom, and it will come out white, without any evil, as one of the nine signs (sent) to the Pharaoh and his people. Surely they have been a sinful people. [12]

So when Our signs came to them as an eye-opener, they said, "This is a clear magic." [13] And they denied them out of sheer injustice and arrogance, though their hearts believed them (to be true). See, then, how was the fate of the mischief-makers. [14]

Commentary

Adoption of natural means for one's need is not against trust in Allah

إِذْ قَالَ مُوسَىٰ لِأَهْلِهِ إِنِّي آنَسْتُ نَارًا ط سَاتِيكُمْ مِنْهَا بِخَبَرٍ أَوْ آتِيكُمْ بِشِهَابٍ قَبَسٍ لَّعَلَّكُمْ تَصْطَلُونَ ﴿٧﴾

(Remember) when Mūsā said to his family, "I have noticed a fire. I shall bring to you some news or bring to you an inflamed ember, so that you may warm yourselves" (27:7).

Here Sayyidnā Mūsā (عليه السلام) faced two necessities. One, to find out the way, which he had forgotten, and second, to warm up with the fire, because it was a cold night. For achieving this purpose he tried to go to

mount Ṭūr. But he did not make a claim of success in his endeavour, rather he uttered such words that conveyed his servitude and hope from Allah Ta'ālā. Thus, it is apparent that in order to meet one's requirements and needs in life it is not against the trust in Allah to strive and make endeavour. But the conviction should be in Allah Ta'ālā and not in one's own efforts. Perhaps, the wisdom in showing him the fire was that it had fulfilled his two needs – finding the way and to get warm with its heat. (Ruḥ)

Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام has said اُمْكُنُوا and تَصْطَلُونُ which are both in plural form, and are used where the addressees are more than one, although there was only his wife (Sayyidnā Shu'āib's عليه السلام daughter) with him. Use of plural form for her only was to show respect to her. It was in the same manner as some times the noble people use plural form in addressing even a single person. It is reported from the Holy Prophet ﷺ also in aḥādīth that he used to address his wives in plural form.

It is prudent not to refer one's wife by her name in general gatherings, rather an allusion for the purpose is better

قَالَ مُوسَى لِأَهْلِهِ (Mūsā said to his family) The word "Ahl" is used in this verse for the wife of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام while this word means "family" and includes all the members of one's household alongwith his wife, although the wife of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was the only one present at the time of this incident, but by the use of this word in his discourse there is a hint that while referring to one's wife in a group of people it is better to use common words. For example, 'my family members are of the opinion'.

فَلَمَّا جَاءَهَا نُودِيَ أَنْ بُورِكَ مَنْ فِي النَّارِ وَمَنْ حَوْلَهَا وَسُبْحَنَ اللَّهُ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٨﴾ يَمْوَسَّىٰ إِنَّهُ أَنَا اللَّهُ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿٩﴾

So when he came to it, he was called: "Blessed is the one who is in the fire and the one who is around it And pure is Allah, the Lord of the worlds. O Mūsā, the fact is that I AM Allah, the Mighty, the Wise. (27:8 - 9)

The real nature of seeing the fire and hearing the voice from it

This incident of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام has appeared in the Qur'an at many places under different chapters. Two sentences in the above verses of Sūrah An-Naml call for special attention. One, بُورِكَ مَنْ فِي النَّارِ (Blessed is the one who is in the fire) and two, إِنَّهُ أَنَا اللَّهُ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ (The fact is that I AM

Allah, the Mighty, the Wise) In Sūrah Ṭa-Ḥā, the commentary on which appears in this volume earlier, this incident is mentioned in these words:

إِذْ رَأَىٰ نَارًا فَقَالَ لِأَهْلِهِ امْكُثُوا إِنِّي آنَسْتُ نَارًا لَّعَلِّي آتِيكُم مِّنْهَا بِقَبَسٍ أَوْ أَجْدُ عَلَىٰ النَّارِ
هُدًى ﴿١٠﴾ فَلَمَّا أَتَاهَا نُودِيَ يَمْوَسَىٰ ﴿١١﴾ إِنِّي أَنَا رَبُّكَ فَاخْلَعْ نَعْلَيْكَ إِنَّكَ بِالْوَادِ
الْمُقَدَّسِ طَوًى ﴿١٢﴾ وَأَنَا اخْتَرْتُكَ فَاسْتَمِعْ لِمَا يُوحَىٰ ﴿١٣﴾ إِنِّي أَنَا اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا
أَنَا فَاعْبُدْنِي وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ لِذِكْرِي ﴿١٤﴾

When he saw a fire and said to his family, wait. I have noticed a fire. Perhaps I bring you an ember from it, or find some guidance by the fire."

So when he came to it, he was called, "O Mūsā, it is Me, your Lord, remove your shoes, you are in the sacred valley of Tuwa. And I have chosen you, so listen to what is revealed: Surely, I AM ALLAH. There is no god but I, so worship Me and establish Ṣalāh for My remembrance. (20:10-14)

In these verses also two sentences need special attention: **إِنِّي أَنَا رَبُّكَ** (it is Me, your Lord) and **إِنِّي أَنَا اللَّهُ** (I AM ALLAH). And in Sūrah Al-Qaṣaṣ the incident is related in these words:

نُودِيَ مِنْ شَاطِئِ الْوَادِ الْأَيْمَنِ فِي الْبُقْعَةِ الْمُبَارَكَةِ مِنَ الشَّجَرَةِ أَنْ يَمْوَسَىٰ إِنِّي أَنَا
اللَّهُ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ

He was called by a voice coming from a side of the right valley in the blessed ground, from the tree, saying" O Mūsā, I AM Allah, the Lord of the worlds" (28:30)

In all the three Sūrahs although the incident is described under different titles, yet the subject matter is the same, which is that Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام needed fire that night for quite a few reasons. Allah Ta'ālā evinced that to him on a tree of mount Ṭūr, and he heard these words from that fire or the tree:

إِنِّي أَنَا رَبُّكَ

It is Me your Lord. (20:12)

إِنَّهُ، أَنَا اللَّهُ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ

The fact is that I AM ALLAH, the Mighty, the Wise. (27:9)

إِنِّي أَنَا اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنَا

I AM ALLAH. There is no god but I. (20:14)

أَنَا اللَّهُ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ

I AM ALLAH, the Lord of the worlds. (28:30)

It is possible that this vocative might have been repeated again and again, sometime by one word and then by another. The condition of hearing this vocative as described by Abū Ḥayyān in Tafsīr Al-Baḥr ul-Muḥīṭ and by 'Ālūsī in Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī is that it was heard in a manner as if it was emanating from all sides, and not from any particular direction. The hearing of this was also very peculiar in that it was not heard by the ears only but by all the parts of the body, which was nothing less than a miracle.

It was the sound of an invisible speaker which was being heard without a particular quality (*kayf*) and without determining the direction. But its source was the fire or the tree on which the fire was glowing. Under such situations normally people get led into fallacy and involve themselves in idol worshipping. Therefore, under each title, the Oneness of Allah has been reminded and emphasized alongside. In the verse under reference سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ (Pure is Allah) is added for this very warning. In Sūrah Ṭa-Hā the expression لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنَا (20:14) and in Sūrah Al-Qaṣaṣ أَنَا اللَّهُ (28:30) is used for the emphasis of this point. The outcome of this discussion is that the fire was shown to Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام because he was in need of fire and light at that time, otherwise there was no connection between the Word of Allah or with the entity of Allah with the fire or the tree of Ṭūr. Fire was nothing but a creature of Allah Ta'ālā like so many other creatures. This is why the commentators have different views in the interpretation of the verses under reference: أَنَا بُورِكَ مَنْ فِي النَّارِ (27:8) that is Blessed is the one who is in the fire and the one who is around it. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه, Mujāhid and 'Ikrimah have expressed the view that the words مَنْ فِي النَّارِ (the one who is in the fire) stand for Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام because the fire he had seen was not the real fire, but the auspicious spot he had reached was so luminous that it looked like fire from a distance. Therefore, Mūsā عليه السلام was inside that fire, and مَنْ حَوْلَهَا (the one who is around it) is purported for the angels, who were present there nearby. Other commentators have put forward a totally opposite explanation, that the words "who is in the fire" refer to the

angels, while the words "who is around it" stand for Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام. Tafsīr Bayān ul Qur'ān has adopted the latter explanation. It is sufficient to know this much for the understanding of the meaning of these verses.

A narration of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās and Ḥasan Al-Baṣrī and its explanation

Ibn Jarīr, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, Ibn Marduwayh etc. have also quoted another explanation put forward by Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās, Sayyidnā Ḥasan Al-Baṣrī and Sa'īd Ibn Jubair رضى الله عنه about the phrase مَنْ فِي النَّارِ (who is in the fire) that it is meant for Allah Ta'ālā Himself. It is but obvious that fire is created by Allah, and incarnation of the Creator into anything created by Him is impossible. Therefore, this narration cannot be taken to mean that Allah Ta'ālā had transfigured into the fire, as many idol-worshippers believe in transfiguration of God in their idols. This is absolutely against the concept of Tauḥīd (Oneness of Allah). All it means is manifestation, like the reflection in the mirror. The image is manifested in the mirror but it is not transfigured in it. What is seen in the mirror is outside it, having its own entity. It is also quite evident that this manifestation, which is also called refulgence, was not the refulgence of Allah Ta'ālā. It is for the simple reason that if Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام had already witnessed the Divinity, he would not have requested at the mount of Tūr رَبِّ ارْنِيْ اَنْظُرْ اِلَيْكَ that is, 'O my Lord, show Your Self to me (7:143), so that I may look at you'. In that case the reply لَنْ تَرَانِيْ (You will never see me - 7:143) would also have been meaningless. It is now clear that Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه in his explanation had meant the manifestation of Allah Ta'ālā, that is refulgence, which appeared in the form of fire. As it was not the transmigration, it was also not the refulgence of His real Self. The phrase لَنْ تَرَانِيْ (You will never see me) has also clarified that in this world no one can witness the refulgence of His real Self. Then what do manifestation and refulgence really mean? The answer to this is that this refulgence was figurative, which is commonly known among the mystics. It is rather difficult to comprehend it fully, but in order to make it simple according to common understanding, I have tried to explain it in my book Aḥkām ul-Qur'ān, in Arabic language, in the explanation of Sūrah Al-Qaṣaṣ. Those who are interested can see it there.

الْأَمِنْ ظَلَمَ ثُمَّ بَدَّلَ حُسْنًا بَعْدَ سُوءٍ فَإِنِّىْ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿١١﴾

Except him who did wrong, then after (doing) evil replaced (it) with good, then I am Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful. 27:11

The miracle of the staff of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was mentioned in the verse prior to this, where it was also stated that when the staff turned into serpent, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام himself started running out of fear. The other miracle of illuminative hand of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام is related in the verse next to above referred verse. Then why this exception is mentioned in between two verses relating to miracles, and whether this exception is snapped from the subject (*munqaṭi'*) or is it adjoining (*muttaṣil*)? The commentators have different view points on this subject. Some have declared it as snapped from the subject. In that case the verse will read as that in the previous verse it was stated that messengers do not get frightened, then it was also mentioned, by the way, as to who are the ones who should get frightened. They are those who have committed any sin, but later repented and sought Allah's pardon and performed good deeds. Although Allah Ta'ālā would pardon their sins, but even then there would be possibility of traces of sins being left over. It is for this reason that they always remain fearful of Allah. But If the exception is regarded adjoining with the subject, then the meaning of the verse would be that Allah's messengers do not get frightened except those who have committed some trifle or minor mistake and have repented on that. In that situation such trifle sins are forgiven. But the actual position is that even if there were some minor slips by the messengers, they were not regarded as sins – neither small nor big. Although they looked like sins but factually they were errors of *ijtihad*. According to this interpretation, this exception is an allusion toward the incident of the Egyptian who was killed by Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام by error of judgement. Although this error was pardoned by Allah Ta'ālā, yet its effect remained with Mūsā عليه السلام leaving some fear of the incident. Had this incident not have occurred, there would not have been any fear of the sort.

Verses 15 - 19

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا دَاوُدَ وَسُلَيْمَانَ عِلْمًا ۖ وَقَالَ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي فَضَّلَنَا عَلَى
كَثِيرٍ مِّنْ عِبَادِهِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٥﴾ وَوَرِثَ سُلَيْمَانُ دَاوُدَ وَقَالَ يَا أَيُّهَا
النَّاسُ عُلِّمْنَا مَنْطِقَ الطَّيْرِ وَأَوْتَيْنَا مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ ۖ إِنَّ هَذَا لَهُ

الْفَضْلَ الْمُبِينُ ﴿١٦﴾ وَحُشِرَ لِسُلَيْمَانَ جُنُودُهُ مِنَ الْجِنِّ وَالْإِنسِ
وَالطَّيْرِ فَهُمْ يُوزَعُونَ ﴿١٧﴾ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا أَتَوْا عَلَىٰ وَادِ النَّمْلِ قَالَتْ
نَمْلَةٌ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّمْلُ ادْخُلُوا مَسْكِنَكُمْ ۚ لَا يَحْطِمَنَّكُمْ سُلَيْمَانُ
وَجُنُودُهُ ۚ وَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٨﴾ فَتَبَسَّمَ ضَاحِكًا مِّن قَوْلِهَا وَقَالَ
رَبِّ أَوْزِعْنِي أَنْ أَشْكُرَ نِعْمَتَكَ الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيَّ وَعَلَىٰ وَالِدَيَّ وَأَنْ
أَعْمَلَ صَالِحًا تَرْضَاهُ وَأَدْخِلْنِي بِرَحْمَتِكَ فِي عِبَادِكَ الصَّالِحِينَ ﴿١٩﴾

And surely We gave knowledge to Dāwūd and Sulaimān. And they said, "Praise belongs to Allah who made us excel many of His believing slaves. [15] And Sulaimān inherited (the traits of) Dāwūd and said, "O people we have been taught the speech of birds and we have been given of everything. Indeed, this is the evident grace (of Allah)." [16]

And mustered for Sulaimān were his forces from among the Jinns and the humans and the birds. So all of them were kept under (his) control, [17] until when they reached the valley of the ants, one of the ants said, "O ants, enter your dwelling places, lest Sulaimān and his armies crush you unknowingly." [18] So he (Sulaimān) smiled, laughing at her speech and said, "My Lord, enable me that I become grateful to Your favour that you have bestowed on me and on my parents and that I do the good deeds You like, and admit me, by Your mercy, among Your righteous slaves." [19]

Commentary

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا دَاوُدَ وَسُلَيْمَانَ عِلْمًا

And surely We gave knowledge to Dāwūd and Sulaimān. (27:15)

The knowledge given to Sayyidnā Dāwūd and Sulaimān عليهما السلام was obviously the special knowledge normally given to the prophets about their functions and obligations as prophets, but at the same time it may also include other sciences and arts, as Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام was given the art of making armors. Sayyidnā Dāwūd and Sulaimān عليهما السلام

enjoyed a special position among the prophets in that they were also bestowed with the empire along with the prophethood. The empire was of a very special nature in that they ruled over not only the humans but also the Jinns and animals. While relating all these graces, knowledge is mentioned first, which is a clear hint that knowledge is superior and paramount among them all. (Qurṭubī)

There is no heritage of wealth among the prophets

وَوَرِثَ سُلَيْمٰنُ دَاوۡدَ (And Sulaimān inherited Dāwūd - 27:16). The inheritance mentioned in this verse is not the inheritance of wealth and property, because the Holy Prophet ﷺ has clearly declared that the prophets do neither inherit the property of anyone nor does their property is inherited by anyone. Tirmidhī and Abū Dāwūd have reported from Sayyidnā Abuddardā' ؓ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said, 'Ulamā' (men of knowledge) are the inheritors of prophets, but the prophets did not leave *dirhams* or *dinars* (wealth) as their inheritance; instead, they have left knowledge as their heritage. Al-Kulaini, the famous Shi'ite scholar, has reported from Sayyidna Ja'far Aṣ-ṣādiq that he said, "Sayyidnā Sulaimān ؑ was the inheritor of Sayyidnā Dāwūd ؑ, and the Holy Prophet ﷺ was the inheritor of Sayyidnā Sulaimān ؑ. (Rūḥ from al-Kulaini). This statement makes the issue very clear that the inheritance is used here in the sense of heritage of knowledge (because nobody can claim that the Holy Prophet ﷺ inherited the property of Sulaimān ؑ). Rationally speaking also, here inheritance cannot mean wealth, because when Sayyidnā Dāwūd ؑ died he had 19 sons, hence if inheritance of wealth was meant to be distributed, then all these sons would have been entitled for the inheritance, and it cannot be exclusive to Sayyidnā Sulaimān ؑ alone. It is, therefore, quite clear that the inheritance meant here is the one in which the brothers were not included and only Sayyidnā Sulaimān ؑ was the inheritor. This could only be the inheritance of knowledge and prophethood. Along with that inheritance, Allah Ta'ālā also graced him with the empire of Sayyidnā Dāwūd ؑ and furthermore control over the Jinns, birds, animals and the wind. In the light of these proofs, the narration of Ṭabrasī is proved to be wrong in which he has regarded inheritance as that of wealth on authority of some Imāms of Ahl-ul-Bait. (Rūḥ)

The period between the death of Sayyidnā Sulaimān ؑ and the

birth of the last of the prophets the Holy Prophet ﷺ was seventeen hundred years, while Jews calculate this period as fourteen hundred years. The life span of Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام was a little over fifty years. (Qurṭubī)

It is permissible to use plural form for one's own self, provided it is not out of arrogance

عَلَّمْنَا مَنْطِقَ الطَّيْرِ وَأَوْثَيْنَا (27:16). Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام has used plural form for himself as a regal idiom, although he was alone. It was to impress his subjects, so that they do not indulge in indolence in the obedience of Allah Ta'ālā and in following him. Similarly, there is no harm if the rulers and officials also use plural form for themselves while they are in the company of their subjects, provided it is for the esteem of the office they are holding and not out of arrogance.

Birds and animals also have sense and intelligence

There is sense and intelligence to some degree in all animals and birds. However, it is not developed to such an extent that they were made to follow any injunctions of the Sharī'ah. But the humans and jinns are bestowed with such perfected sense and intelligence that they are made the addressee and followers of the injunctions of Allah Ta'ālā. Imām Shafi'ī رحمه الله تعالى has said that dove is the cleverest of all the birds, and Ibn 'Atiyyah has said that ant is very intelligent animal; its smelling power is very strong . If it gets hold of a grain it breaks it into two, so that it does not germinate, and thus it stock its food for the winters. (Qurṭubī)

Special Note

The expression "speech of birds" is used in the verse because of the incident of the hoopoe which is a bird, otherwise Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام was taught languages of all the beasts, birds and the insects, as mentioned in the next verse about understanding the language of the ant. Imām Qurṭubī has mentioned in his Tafsīr different incidents in which Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام told the people how different birds chirped and what did they mean. The chirping of each bird was a word of advice.

وَأَوْثَيْنَا مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ (and we have been given of every thing -16). The word كُل (every) applies to everything of a kind, but sometimes its application is not universal but pertains to a specific purpose . Here also it is used in

that sense and "everything" refers to those things only which are needed by the government or an empire. Otherwise it is obvious that they did not have aeroplanes, motor cars or railways in those days.

رَبِّ أَوْزِعْنِي (My Lord, enable me - 27:19). It is derived from وَزَعَ (*waz'*), which lexically means to stop or restrain. Here it means 'enable me with Divine help so that I should have the trait of gratitude with me all the time and do not part with it ever', which will result in restraint. In the earlier verse فَهُمْ يُوزَعُونَ (27:17) (translated as "kept under control" it was also used in the same sense, that in order to save them from confusion because of their large number the armies were restrained.

وَأَنْ أَعْمَلَ صَالِحًا تَرْضَاهُ (and that I do the good deeds You like - 27:19). Here رضا (*liking*) means acceptance. Thus the meaning is 'Yā Allah! Grace me with Divine help for such righteous deeds which are acceptable to You'. From this it is argued in Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī that it is not necessary for the righteous deeds to be accepted, but their acceptance is dependent on certain conditions. It is further explained that there is no relation between righteousness and acceptance either rationally or in religious law. It is for this reason that the prophets used to pray for the acceptance of their righteous deeds. Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm and Isma'īl عَلَيْهِمَا السَّلَام prayed while constructing the House of Allah رَبَّنَا تَقَبَّلْ مِنَّا (Our Lord accept from us - 2:127). It shows that after doing a good deed, one should not be complacent, but should pray to Allah for its acceptance.

Despite having done good deeds and their acceptance the entry into Paradise will not be possible without the grace of Allah

وَأَدْخِلْنِي بِرَحْمَتِكَ فِي عِبَادِكَ الصَّالِحِينَ (And admit me, by your mercy, among your righteous slaves - 27:19). Despite having performed good deeds and their acceptance, the entry into Paradise will depend on the grace and kindness of Allah Ta'ālā. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has said that no one will enter into Paradise relying only on his deeds. So the companions enquired from the Holy Prophet ﷺ "Even you too?", and he answered "Yes, me too, but I am surrounded by Allah's favour and grace". (Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī)

Sayyidnā Sulaimān عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام was also praying for the grace of Allah for the entry into Paradise in these words 'O Allah, grace me also with your favour so that I become entitled to enter Paradise'.

Verses 20 - 28

وَتَفَقَّدَ الطَّيْرَ فَقَالَ مَا لِيَ لَا أَرَى الْهُدْهُدَ ۖ أَمْ كَانَ مِنَ الْغَائِبِينَ ﴿٢٠﴾
 «لَأَعَذِّبَنَّهُ» عَذَابًا شَدِيدًا أَوْ لَا أَذْبَحَنَّهُ أَوْ لِيَأْتِنِي بِسُلْطَنٍ مُبِينٍ ﴿٢١﴾
 «فَمَكَثَ غَيْرَ بَعِيدٍ فَقَالَ أَحَطْتُ بِمَا لَمْ تُحِطُ بِهِ وَجِئْتُكَ مِنْ سَبَإٍ بِنَبَأٍ يَقِينٍ» ﴿٢٢﴾ إِنِّي وَجَدْتُ امْرَأَةً تَمْلِكُهُمْ وَأُوتِيَتْ مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَلَهَا عَرْشٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿٢٣﴾ وَجَدْتُهَا وَقَوْمَهَا يَسْجُدُونَ لِلشَّمْسِ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَزَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ أَعْمَالَهُمْ فَصَدَّهُمْ عَنِ السَّبِيلِ فَهُمْ لَا يَهْتَدُونَ ﴿٢٤﴾ أَلَّا يَسْجُدُوا لِلَّهِ الَّذِي يُخْرِجُ الْخَبَاءَ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا تُخْفُونَ وَمَا تُعْلِنُونَ ﴿٢٥﴾ اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ رَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ ﴿٢٦﴾ قَالَ سَنَنْظُرُ أَصَدَقْتَ أَمْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الْكَاذِبِينَ ﴿٢٧﴾ إِذْهَبْ بِكُتُبِي هَذَا فَالِقَهُ إِلَيْهِمْ ثُمَّ تَوَلَّ عَنْهُمْ فَانْظُرْ مَاذَا يَرْجِعُونَ ﴿٢٨﴾

And (once) he (Sulaimān) checked the birds and said, "What is wrong with me that I do not see the *hudhud* (hoopoe)? Rather he has disappeared. [20] I will punish him with a severe punishment or slaughter him unless he brings to me a clear plea." [21] Then the bird did not take long and said (to Sulaimān), "I have discovered what you did not, and have brought to you a sure information from Saba' (Sheba). [22] I have found a woman ruling over them and she has been given of everything (she needs) and she has a great throne. [23] I have found her and her people prostrating to the sun, instead of Allah, and the Satan has beautified their deeds for them and has prevented them from the way, so they do not take the right path, [24] that is, they do not prostrate to Allah who brings forth what is hidden in the heavens and the earth and who knows whatever you conceal and whatever you reveal, Allah! There is no god but He, the Lord of the Great Throne." [26]

He (Sulaimān) said, "We shall see whether you have told the truth or you are one of the liars. [27] Go with this letter of mine and deliver it down to them, then turn back from them and see what they return." [28]

Commentary

وَتَفَقَّدَ الطَّيْرَ (And he checked the birds - 27:20). The word تَفَقَّدَ (*tafaqqud*) means to verify about the presence or absence of some people. Hence it is translated as to check. Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام was bestowed by Allah Ta'ālā the rule over Jinns, the beasts and the birds, apart from humans. As it is customary for the ruler to look after and take care of all of his subjects, it is stated in this verse تَفَقَّدَ الطَّيْرَ. That is Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام inspected the birds from his subjects, and made a note of the presence and absence of them all. The Holy Prophet ﷺ also had the habit to keep himself informed about the well-being of his companions. If some one was absent, he used to go to his house to find out his welfare. If any one was sick, he would go and visit him and do the needful nursing. If some one was afflicted with any trouble, he would make the effort to remove it.

It is necessary for the rulers to take care of their subjects and for the saints of their disciples and students

This verse has proved that Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام used to keep an eye on all types of his subjects, and used to keep himself fully informed about them, so much so that the absence of a small and weak bird like a hoopoe which has a small population compared to other birds, did not go unnoticed from him. It is also possible that his specific enquiry about the hoopoe was due to its small population and weak make-up among the species of birds. Therefore, he made special effort to keep his eyes on the weaker section of his subjects.

Among the companions, Sayyidnā 'Umar رضي الله عنه established the traditions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ in totality during his tenure as caliph. He used to go round the streets of Madīnah during the nights to keep him fully abreast with the state of affairs. If he found any one in distress or need, he would help him out. A number of such incidents are related in his biography. He used to say "If a wolf kills a lamb by the side of river Euphrates, for that too Umar will be answerable". (Qurṭubī)

Such were the principles of rule and administration, which were taught by the prophets and practically demonstrated by the revered

companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Because of these practices, the entire populace, both Muslims and non-Muslims, used to live in complete harmony and tranquility. Such justice and fair play, composure and tranquility were never witnessed ever in the whole world after their time.

مَا لِيَ لَا أَرَى الْهُدُودَ رَأَى كَأَنَّمْ كَانَ مِنَ الْعَائِيَيْنِ

"What is wrong with me that I do not see the hoopoe; rather he has disappeared? - 27:20

Taking account of one's own Self

Apparently Sulaimān عليه السلام should have said at this occasion, "What is wrong with the hoopoe that he is absent?" But Sulaimān عليه السلام asked about his own wrong when he said, "What is wrong with *me*?" Perhaps, it was because the hoopoe and all other birds were put under his control as a special reward. Initially it crossed his mind momentarily that probably His blessings have been curtailed for some slip on his part that a species of birds (the hoopoe) was not present. So, he made some soul searching to find out what could have been the reason for its absence? It was a case similar to that of the mystic saints who make enquiries from their Self before looking into the material causes for the relief of any distress, or when any blessing is reduced for them. It is their practice to take into account of any possible slips on their part in paying gratitude to Allah Ta'ālā for His bounties, which might have caused the withdrawal of the blessings from them. Qurṭubī has quoted here the practice of these saints on the authority of Ibn al-'Arabī in the following words:

إذا فقدوا أفعالهم تفقدوا أعمالهم That is 'when these saints do not succeed in their objectives, they take stock of their deeds to find out where have they committed the mistake'.

After this initial stock-taking of Self and due considerations and deliberations it is said رَأَى كَأَنَّمْ كَانَ مِنَ الْعَائِيَيْنِ (rather, he has disappeared - 27:20). Here the word رَأَى is used for the meaning of the word بَلَ (rather) (Qurṭubī). Therefore, the meaning of the sentence is 'It is not that my sight has faltered in locating the hoopoe, but in fact it is not present'.

Reason for picking up hoopoe from among the birds, and an important warning

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه was asked as to what was the

reason that the hoopoe was picked up from all the birds. He replied that Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام had camped at a place where there was no water, and Allah Ta'ālā has bestowed such a peculiar instinct to hoopoe that it can see things under the ground and can also locate the underground water. Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام wanted to find out, through the proficiency of the hoopoe, the depth and extent of the underground water. Having known the location of the underground water, he would have commanded the Jinns to excavate the ground to bring the water up – a task they would have performed very quickly. Paradoxically, despite having the piercing sight, the hoopoe gets entrapped in the nets of the hunters. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه has commented on this:

قف يا وقاف كيف يرى الهدد باطن الارض وهو لا يرى الفخ حين يقع فيه (قرطبي)

'O the people of knowledge! try to understand this fact that the hoopoe has the ability to see things under the ground, but the net spread out over the ground gets obscured from its sight, and hence it gets entrapped in that'.

The bottom line to understand is that whatever is destined for a person through the divine decree, whether it is trouble or comfort, has to be enforced, and no one can escape from it by his wisdom, insight or through the use of force or money.

لَأَعَذِّبَنَّهُ، عَذَابًا شَدِيدًا أَوْ لَا أَذْبَحَنَّهُ

I will punish him with a severe punishment - 27:21

It is part of the political sagacity to punish the absentee after making due scrutiny.

It is permissible to punish a lethargic animal moderately

Allah Ta'ālā had permitted Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام to punish the animals in the same way, as He had permitted people of all ages, a permission which is still valid, to slaughter them to make use of their flesh, bones, skin etc. Similarly, if the domestic animals, such as cow, horse, camel, donkey etc., do not perform their normal duty, then it is permissible even now to punish them moderately for disciplining. Punishing animals, other than domestic, is not permissible under Islamic law. (Qurṭubī)

أُولَئِكَ يُنَبِّئُ بِسُلْطَنِ مُبِينٍ

Unless he brings to me a clear plea. - 27:21

That is, if the hoopoe offers a plausible excuse for its absence, then it will be saved from the punishment. There is a subtle hint in it that it is expected of a ruler or an administrator that if someone falters doing something, then it should be thoroughly investigated before punishing him. The punishment should be enforced only when the guilt is established, otherwise he should be forgiven.

أَحْطْتُ بِمَا لَمْ تُحِطْ بِهِ (I have discovered what you did not - 27:22). That is, the hoopoe said while offering its excuse that it knew something which he did not know. What it meant was that it had brought information, which he (Sulaimān عليه السلام) did not know before.

The prophets do not have the knowledge of the unknown

Imām Qurṭubī has deduced from this incident that the prophets do not have the knowledge of the unseen (*‘Ilm ul-ghayb*), so that they could know all about every thing. It is quite evident from this verse.

وَجِئْتُكَ مِنْ سَبَإٍ بِنَبَأٍ يَقِينٍ

"And have brought to you a sure information from Saba' (Sheba)". 27:22

Saba' (Sheba) (سَبَآء) is a well-known city of Yemen, and its other name is Ma'arib (مَارِب). The distance between San'a', the capital of Yemen, and Saba' is three day's journey.

Is it proper for a junior to say to his senior that he knows more than him?

On the basis of this conversation by the hoopoe, some people have deduced that it is appropriate for a pupil to say to his teacher or for a common man to say to a knowledgeable person that he knows more than the latter on the subject, provided he is absolutely confident that his knowledge on that subject is really more than others. But it is argued in Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī that such an assertion before the elders and scholars is against the etiquettes, and should be avoided. This argument, however, does not apply to the conversation of the hoopoe, because it made that statement to save itself from the punishment and to justify its excuse for the absence. The hoopoe actually wanted to place before Sulaimān عليه السلام the exact position, so that he could understand the reason for its absence.

In such situations it is not improper if something is said against the normal etiquettes.

إِنِّي وَجَدْتُ امْرَأَةً تَمْلِكُهُمْ

I have found a woman ruling over them, - 27:23

The name of this woman is given in the history as Bilqīs, daughter of Sharāḥīl. But in some other narrations, it is mentioned that her mother was a jinni whose name was Bal'amah, daughter of Shīṣān. (Wuhaib b. Jarīr has reported this from Khalīl Ibn Aḥmad, Qurṭubī) Her grandfather, Hudahud, was a great king and controlled the entire land of Yemen. He had forty sons. All these sons became kings. Her father, Sūrah, had married a jinni woman, who gave birth to her (Bilqīs). Different reasons are given for his marriage to a jinni. One of them being that he used to say with arrogance "No one from you is a match for me; hence I will not marry. It is because I do not like marrying outside my matching clan". As a result of this, people got him married to a jinni woman. (Qurṭubī) Perhaps it was his conceit that he deemed his own people as not his equal. This did not go well with the Divine writ and he was made to marry a jinni woman, who was neither from his family nor his kind or race.

Is it permissible to marry a jinni?

Some people have expressed doubt on the question, because they thought the jinns are not capable of reproducing like the humans. Ibn-al-'Arabī has opined in his commentary that this is a wrong conception. It is established through authentic āḥādīth that jinns also possess all the requisites of reproduction and the essentials of male and female, as in humans.

There is another aspect to this question from the angle of Islamic law. That is, whether it is permissible for a man to marry a jinni woman? On this aspect there are different views of the Islamic jurists. Some have ruled that it is permissible, while others have ruled it out, because of their different kind, like the animals. In the book named as (أكام المرجان في أحكام الجان) this subject is discussed in detail, where some incidents are quoted mentioning that Muslim men married Muslim jinni women, and they also gave birth to children. Here this subject is irrelevant, because the father of Bilqīs, who married the jinni woman, was not a Muslim. Hence, the question of permissibility does not arise here. In Islamic law the lineage is

based on father, and the father of Bilqīs was a human. Therefore, Bilqīs would also be regarded as a human. In some narrations, marriage of Sulaimān عليه السلام with Bilqīs is mentioned. Even if these narrations are correct, it does not corroborate permissibility to marry a jinni woman, because Bilqīs herself was not a jinni, though her mother might have been one. Only Allah knows best. The marriage of Sulaimān عليه السلام will be discussed later in this commentary.

Is it permissible for a woman to be king or the head or Imām of a people?

It is reported in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī on the authority of Sayyidnā Ibn ‘Abbās رضي الله عنه that when the Holy Prophet ﷺ learnt that the people of Persia have made the daughter of Kisrā as their queen, he said لَنْ يُفْلِحَ قَوْمٌ وَلَوْ أَمَرَهُمْ امْرَأَةٌ. That is, "Those people will never prosper who give control of authority to a woman". It is for this verdict that scholars are unanimous on the point that the control of a government, an empire or caliphate cannot be assigned to a woman. Rather the greater *imāmah* (*al-imāmah al-kubrā*) is also allowed only to men folk, like the Imāmah for prayers. As for Bilqīs being the queen of Saba', it does not make it to be a religious decree, unless it is proven that Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام had married her, and then retained her as the queen. This assumption is not proven by any authentic narration, which could be trusted for the purpose of legislation of religious laws.

وَأُوتِيَتْ مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ

She has been given of everything - 23

It means that whatever services are needed to a king or an aristocrat according to their time, they all were available to her. It is, however, obvious that those things that were not invented by then, their unavailability is not in conflict with this verse.

وَلَهَا عَرْشٌ عَظِيمٌ (And she has a great throne - 23) Literal meaning of ‘Arsh (عَرْش) is throne of the empire. A narration is attributed to Sayyidnā Ibn ‘Abbās رضي الله عنه that the length of the throne of Bilqīs was eighty yards, its breadth was forty yards and height thirty yards. It was profusely decorated with pearls, red rubies, topaz and olivine, and its legs were studded with precious stones and pearls. Its curtains were made of silk and fine cloth. The throne was secured within seven buildings, one within

the other, all well protected and locked.

وَجَدْنَاهَا وَقَوْمَهَا يَسْجُدُونَ لِلشَّمْسِ

I have found her and her people prostrating to the sun - 27:24

This shows that her people were star-worshippers and used to worship the sun. Some believe that they were Zoroastrians, who worship fire and all forms of light.

أَلَّا يَسْجُدُوا لِلَّهِ الَّذِي يُخْرِجُ الْخَبْءَ (that is, they do not prostrate to Allah who bring forth what is hidden - 25). This sentence is linked with the previous one, "The Satan has beautified their deeds - 26" and the sense is that the Satan had engrained in their minds that they should not bow down before Allah, or had prevented them from the righteous path so that they should not prostrate before Allah Ta'ālā.

Letters and writings are enough proof on religious matters in the normal circumstances

إِذْهَبْ بِكِتَابِي هَذَا (Go with this letter of mine - 28). Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام considered it enough to write to the queen of Saba' (Sheba) for the fulfillment of his duty to invite her to faith, and hence sent her a letter. This shows that in the normal circumstances the letter or writing is an acceptable proof. The religious jurists did not accept a letter as an evidence only where a proper personal evidence is required under Islamic law, because testimony is not allowed on telephone or by letter. It has been made mandatory for the witnesses to appear in person before the court. There is a lot of wisdom in this law. Under any law of the world prevalent in any country it is compulsory for the witnesses to appear before the court in person, and the testimony through letter or telephone is not accepted.

Writing letters and sending them to the disbelievers is permissible

Another matter that has been proved by the letter of Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام is that in preaching of religion and invitation to Islam it is permissible to write letters to disbelievers and infidels. According to many Ṣaḥīḥ aḥādīth it is established that the Holy Prophet ﷺ had also written letters to many infidels.

Social etiquettes should always be observed, no matter if it is a gathering of infidels

فَالْقُلُوبُ إِلَيْهِمْ ثُمَّ تَوَلَّى عَنْهُمْ

Throw it down to them, then turn back from them - 27:28

When Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام made use of the hoopoe as a courier, he also taught him the social etiquette that after delivering the letter to Queen of Saba' it should move out of her court, which is the norm of the royal courts. This shows that observance of social etiquettes and good human behavior is desirable as a general rule.

Verses 29 - 37

قَالَتْ يَا أَيُّهَا الْمَلَأُوْا إِنِّي أُلْقِيَ إِلَيَّ كِتَابٌ كَرِيمٌ ﴿٢٩﴾ إِنَّهُ مِنْ سُلَيْمَانَ
وَأَنَّهُ بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ ﴿٣٠﴾ أَلَّا تَعْلَمُوْا عَلَيَّ وَاتُّونِي
مُسْلِمِينَ ﴿٣١﴾ قَالَتْ يَا أَيُّهَا الْمَلَأُوْا أَفْتُونِي فِي أَمْرِي ۚ مَا كُنْتُ
قَاطِعَةً أَمْرًا حَتَّى تَشْهَدُوْنَ ﴿٣٢﴾ قَالُوا نَحْنُ أَوْلُوْا قُوَّةً وَأُولُوْا بَأْسٍ
شَدِيْدٌ ۚ وَالْأَمْرُ إِلَيْكَ فَانْظُرِي مَاذَا تَأْمُرِيْنَ ﴿٣٣﴾ قَالَتْ إِنَّ الْمُلُوكَ
إِذَا دَخَلُوْا قَرْيَةً أَفْسَدُوْهَا وَجَعَلُوْا أَعِزَّةً أَهْلِهَا أَذِلَّةً ۚ وَكَذَلِكَ
يَفْعَلُوْنَ ﴿٣٤﴾ وَإِنِّي مُرْسَلَةٌ إِلَيْهِمْ بِهَدِيَّةٍ فَنْظُرْهُ ۚ بِمَ يَرْجِعُ
الْمُرْسَلُوْنَ ﴿٣٥﴾ فَلَمَّا جَاءَ سُلَيْمٰن قَالَ أَتِمِدُوْا نِّبْمَالٍ فَمَا أَمْسَنَ
اللَّهُ خَيْرٌ مِّمَّا آتٰكُمْ ۚ بَلْ أَنْتُمْ بِهَدِيَّتِكُمْ تَفْرَحُوْنَ ﴿٣٦﴾ اِرْجِعْ إِلَيْهِمْ
فَلَنَاتِيَنَّهُمْ بِجُنُوْدٍ لَّا قَبْلَ لَهُمْ بِهَا وَلَنُخْرِجَنَّهُمْ مِّنْهَا أَذِلَّةً وَهُمْ
ضَعُفُوْنَ ﴿٣٧﴾

She (the queen) said (to her officials after receiving the letter), "O chieftains, there has been delivered to me an esteemed letter. [29] It is from Sulaimān and it is (in the following words:) With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful. [30] Do not rebel against me and come to me in submission." [31] She said, "O chieftains, advise me in the matter I have (before me). I am not the one who decides a matter absolutely unless you are present with me." [32] They said, "We are powerful and tough fighters, and the decision lies with

you; so consider what command you should give." [33] She said, "In fact when the kings enter a town, they put it to disorder and put its honorable citizens to disgrace, and this is how they normally do. [34] And I am going to send a gift to them, then see, what response the envoys will bring back." [35]

So when he (the envoy) came to Sulaimān, he said, "Are you extending a financial aid to me? So what Allah has given me is much better than what He has given to you. But you yourselves are proud of your gift. [36] Go back to them, and we will bring to them forces they have no power to face, and we will certainly drive them out from there in humiliation while they are disgraced." [37]

Commentary

قَالَتْ يَا أَيُّهَا الْمَلَأُوْا إِنِّي أُلْقِيَ إِلَيَّ كِتَابٌ كَرِيمٌ

She (the queen) said (to her officials after receiving the letter), "O chieftains, there has been thrown to me an esteemed letter, 27:29.

Literal meaning of Karīm is respectable, honorable or esteemed, and idiomatically this word is used for a letter when it is sealed. This is why Sayyidnā Ibn ‘Abbās ؓ, Qatādah, Zohair ؓ etc. have interpreted the expression كِتَابٌ كَرِيمٌ as the sealed book, which indicates that Sayyidnā Sulaimān ؓ had put his seal on the letter. When the Holy Prophet ﷺ learnt about the tradition of the non-Arab kings that they do not read the letter if it is not sealed, he got a seal made for himself, and used it on the letters he sent to Caesar and Chosro. It shows that the practice of sealing a letter is to show respect to the letter as well as to the addressee. The present day practice is to secure the letter in an envelope, which is as good as sealing it. Where show of respect to the addressee is intended, it is closer to the practice of the Holy Prophet ﷺ to secure it in an envelope.

The language of the letter of Sulaiman ؓ

Although Sayyidnā Sulaimān ؓ was not an Arab, yet it is not unlikely that he knew the Arabic language, especially when he knew the languages of the animals. As the Arabic language is supreme among all the languages, it is possible that he might have written the letter in Arabic. It is also probable because Bilqīs was an Arab by race, and she

read the letter and understood it. The other probability is that he had written the letter in his own language and an interpreter read it for her. (Rūḥ)

Some rules of writing letters

إِنَّهُ مِنْ سُلَيْمَانَ وَإِنَّهُ بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

It is from Sulaimān and it is (in the following words:) With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful. 27:30

There is not a single aspect of human life on which Qur'ān does not provide guidance. Mutual exchange of welfare and other information through letters is part of human requirements. In this Sūrah, full text of the letter from Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام to Queen Saba' has been reproduced. This is a letter from a prophet, and Qur'ān has reproduced it as an approved format for a letter. Hence, it should be taken in that light and Muslims should try to follow the guidance provided in it for letter writing.

Writer should first write his name and then of the addressee

The very first guidance provided in this letter is that Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام has begun it by writing his name. How did he write the name of the addressee, it is not mentioned in the Qur'ān. However, it does tell us that it was the practice of the prophets to write their name first, in which there are many benefits. For instance, the addressee would know even before reading the letter from whom it has come. So he would read the letter in the backdrop of his relations with the writer, and any confusion about the identity of the writer would be eliminated right in the beginning. The Holy Prophet ﷺ had also adopted the same practice in all his letters addressed to various persons, and began the letter with the wordings من محمد عبد الله ورسوله (From Muḥammad, the slave of Allah and His messenger)

A question may arise here as to whether it would be a disrespect to the addressee if a junior writes his name first while writing to his elder, teacher or senior in status? So, is it appropriate to follow this practice or not? In this respect the companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ had acted differently. Most of them preferred to follow the practice of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and not the requirement of the formality, and wrote their names first even when writing to the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself. Rūḥ

ul-Ma'ānī has reproduced a narration of Sayyidnā 'Anas ؓ from al-Baḥr ul-Muḥīṭ as follows:

ما كان احد اعظم حرمة من رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم، وكان اصحابه اذا كتبوا اليه كتاباً بدأوا بانفسهم. قلت: وكتاب علاء الحضرمي رضى الله عنه يشهد له، على ما روى.

"No human is more revered than the Holy Prophet ﷺ, but when his companions used to write to him, they would first write their names, and I say that Sayyidnā 'Alā' Al-Ḥadramī's letter, which he wrote to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, is a proof to that."

However, after quoting these narrations in Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī it is observed that all this discussion is about the preferred way, otherwise both ways are permissible. If some one writes his name in the last, that too is correct. Religious jurist Abū al-Layth has written in his Bustan that if some one starts with the name of the addressee, no one can question its permissibility, because this has also been the practice among the Muslims for long, and no one has objected to that. (Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī, Qurṭubī)

Replying to letters is also a practice of the prophets

It is observed in Tafsīr ul-Qurṭubī that if someone receives a letter, it is incumbent upon him to answer it, because a letter from someone not present is as good as the greeting of the one who is present. It is attributed to Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ in a narration that he used to regard the reply of a letter as much obligatory as the reply to a greeting by *salām*. (Qurṭubī)

Starting letters with Bismillah

The letter of Sayyidnā Sulaimān ؓ and all the letters sent by the Holy Prophet ﷺ have established that writing Bismillah at the beginning of a letter was the practice of the prophets. As to the question whether Bismillah should precede the name of the writer or not, the practice of the Holy Prophet ﷺ was that he always put Bismillah before his name, and the name of the addressee after his own name. But in the Qur'ān the order is reversed and the name of Sayyidnā Sulaimān ؓ is written first and then Bismillah. Therefore, it is also in order if the name of the writer is written first and then Bismillah. But Ibn Abī Ḥātim has reported on the authority of Yazīd Ibn Raumān that in fact Sayyidnā Sulaimān ؓ had

written his letter in this manner: بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ. من سليمان بن داود الى بلقيس (which means that he wrote Bismillah before his name) but when Bilqīs read out this letter to her people, she mentioned the name of Sulaimān ﷺ first in order to let them know the name of the writer. The Holy Qurʾān has copied what Bilqīs had uttered. There is no mention in the Qurʾān whether Bismillah was written first or the name of Sayyidnā Sulaimān ﷺ in the original letter. There is yet another possibility that the name of Sulaimān ﷺ was written on the envelope and Bismillah at the top of the letter, and when Bilqīs read out the letter to her people she announced the name of Sayyidnā Sulaimān ﷺ first.

Ruling

The original tradition (Sunnah) of letter writing is that all letters should begin with Bismillah. However, the religious jurists have ruled, on the authority of the indications given in the Qurʾān and Sunnah, that if there is a risk of disrespect to the name of Allah on the apprehension that the paper on which Bismillah is written would be thrown away, then it is not right to write Bismillah, lest one should get involved in sin. The present day practice is that letters are thrown away after reading and they end up in garbage. Hence, it is better to perform Sunnah by reciting Bismillah orally before starting the letter, rather than writing it on paper.

Can a paper bearing a Qurʾānic verse be given in the hands of a disbeliever?

Sayyidnā Sulaimān ﷺ had sent this letter to Bilqīs when she was not a Muslim, but بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ was written on it. It confirms that this is permissible. The non-Arab kings to whom the Holy Prophet ﷺ had written letters were disbelievers. But the letters contained some Qurʾānic verses too. It should be understood that although it is not permitted to hand over the Holy Qurʾān to infidels, but any book or paper containing some verses of the Qurʾān does not qualify to be the Qurʾān itself; hence, such papers or books can be handed over to an infidel or to someone without wuḍūʾ (ablution). (Alamgiri)

Letters should be written short, comprehensive, eloquent and effective

Looking at the letter of Sayyidnā Sulaimān ﷺ one cannot avoid noticing that it is so comprehensive that all important matters have been

put together in a few sentences, maintaining the high standard of eloquence alongwith the royal grandeur in front of the infidels. At the same time perfected attributes of Allah Ta'ālā are also described along with an invitation towards Islam. The condemnation of conceit and arrogance is also noticeable. As a matter of fact, this letter is a specimen of the marvel of Qur'ān. Sayyidnā Qatadah ؓ has stated that it was the practice in letter writing by all the prophets to make it brief but at the same time ensuring that nothing mentionable is left out. (Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī)

Consultation in important matters is a Sunnah. It provides the benefit of having views of others, and gives them a sense of participation

قَالَتْ يَا أَيُّهَا الْمَلَأُوْا أَتُونِي فِي أَمْرِي ۚ مَا كُنْتُ قَاطِعَةً أَمْرًا حَتَّى تَشْهَدُونِ

She said, "O chieftains, advise me in the matter I have (before me). I am not the one who decides a matter absolutely unless you are present with me." - 32

The word أَتُونِي is derived from Fatwā فَتْوَى, which means answering some specific issue. Here it means to give counsel or to express one's views. When Queen Bilqīs received the letter of Sayyidnā Ṣulāimān ؑ she called the members of her government and asked their view as to what she should do. Before asking their view on the matter, she encouraged and pleased them by declaring that she did not take decisions without consulting them. Because of her remarks, the ministers and the generals expressed their readiness to sacrifice every thing they had in order to follow her command. نَحْنُ أَوْلُوْا قُوَّةً وَأَوْلُوْا بِأَسْ شَدِيْدٍ وَالْأَمْرُ إِلَيْكِ ("We are powerful and tough fighters, and the decision lies with you - 33). Sayyidnā Qatadah ؓ has related that according to his information there were 313 members in her consultative committee, and each one of them represented and enjoyed the support of ten thousand persons. (Qurṭubī)

This statement brings to light that having consultation with supporters is an old practice. Islam has attached great importance to consultation and has made this mandatory for the government functionaries. So much so that the Holy Prophet ﷺ, who was the recipient of revelations from Allah Ta'ālā and also used to get direct guidance from Him (thus did not have any need for consultation or advice), was also commanded to follow this practice, in order to set up a

tradition for his followers. The Holy Qur'ān directs the Holy Prophet ﷺ, وَشَاوِرْهُمْ فِي الْأَمْرِ (3:159) that is, he should consult them in the matters. There is a sense of participation for the companions in this command, and an advice for the coming generations that the government functionaries must always consult on important matters.

Reaction of Queen Bilqīs on the letter of Sulaimān

After having consulted the functionaries of her government and gaining their confidence, she herself developed a strategy that she should initially test out the real intention of Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام and to find out whether he was actually a prophet and messenger of God, and whether he was really conveying the message of God or he was aspiring for a greater empire. The purpose behind this strategy was to find out that if he was a prophet in reality, then his command should be followed and no hostility be adopted against him. On the other hand if he was only a king and wished to expand his empire by subjugating her kingdom, then a different plan be worked out to face the challenge. To test out the real intention of Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام she adopted the tactic of sending to him precious gifts and presents. If he becomes satisfied after receiving the gifts, then it would indicate that he was only a king and had approached her with mundane motives. On the other hand, if he was actually a prophet then he would not agree on any thing other than acceptance of Islam. Ibn Jarīr has reported this explanation from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه Mujāhid, and Ibn Juraij, and Ibn Wahb رحمهم الله تعالى with several chains of narrators. The same subject is elaborated in the following verse:

وَأَنِّي مُرْسِلَةٌ إِلَيْهِمْ بِهَدِيَّةٍ فَنظُرْهُ بِمَرْجِعِ الْمُرْسَلُونَ

And I am going to send a gift to them, then see, what response the envoys will bring back." 27:35.

Appearance of envoys of Bilqīs in the court of Sulaimān عليه السلام

Historical Isra'īli legends describe in great detail the incident of the visit of the envoys of Bilqīs and the gifts they had taken with them. All versions of the legends agree on that the gifts included some gold bricks, some precious stones, one hundred slaves and one hundred slave girls. But the slave girls were dressed in men's clothes and the slaves were dressed in ladies outfits. There was also a letter from Bilqīs, in which

there were some questions for testing Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام. In the selection of gifts also, his test was intended. Allah Ta'ālā had passed on detailed information of gifts to Sulaimān عليه السلام even before their arrival. Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام commanded the Jinns to lay out a floor of gold and silver bricks over a thirty miles stretch from his court, and that strange looking animals be lined up on either side of this pathway. Their excrement of bowels was also to be placed on the floor of gold and silver. Similarly, his court was decorated with special attention. Four thousand chairs of gold were placed on the left side and four thousand on the right side of the main hall for the scholars, ministers, and other officials of the court. The entire hall was bedecked with precious stones. When Bilqīs's envoys saw animals standing on the floor of gold bricks, they were embarrassed with the gifts they had brought with them. It is reported in some narrations that they threw away their gold bricks. Then as they proceeded, they saw rows of beasts and birds on either side of the pathway. After that they came across the rows of jinns. Seeing them, they were browbeaten. Ultimately, when they reached the court and stood before Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام, he received them with dignity, and entertained them with veneration. But he returned all their gifts and presents, and answered all the questions sent up by Bilqīs. (Qurṭubī)

Return of the presents of Bilqīs by Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام

قَالَ أَتُمِدُّونَ بِمَالٍ فَمَا آتَىٰ ٱللَّهُ خَيْرٌ مِّمَّا أَتَىٰكُمْ ؕ بَلْ أَنتُمْ بِهَدِيَّتِكُمْ تَفْرَحُونَ

"Are you giving me an aid of wealth? So what Allah has given me is much better than He has given to you. But you yourselves are proud of your gift. 27:36.

When Bilqīs's envoys reached the court of Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام with the gifts and presents sent by her, he said to them 'Do you wish to help me with wealth? Whatever wealth and bounties I have been given by Allah is much better than your wealth and material. Therefore, I do not accept your presents of wealth. You better take them away, and enjoy them yourself'.

Is it permissible to accept presents from infidels?

Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام did not accept the presents of Queen Bilqīs, which indicates that it is not permissible or not preferable to accept presents from infidels. The correct position about this question is that if

this may lead to weakening of one's position or that of Muslim community, or is likely to go against the expediency of the national interest, then it is prudent not to accept their presents. (Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī). But if the interest of the Muslims is in favour of acceptance, for instance if this gesture may lead the non-Muslims to the acceptance of Islam, or may ward off some impending danger to Islam, in such situations it is permitted. It was the practice of the Holy Prophet ﷺ to accept presents from some infidels and reject them from others. It is reported in 'Umdatul Qārī Sharḥ al-Bukhārī (Kitāb ul-ḥibah) and Sharḥ-As- Siyar-Al-Kabr on the authority of Sayyidnā Ka'b ibn Mālīk رحمه الله تعالى that 'Āmir ibn Mālīk, brother of Brā', went to Madīnah on some work, when he was a disbelieving infidel, and presented two horses and two pairs of garments to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. He sent back these presents with the remarks "We do not accept presents from disbelievers". Once 'Iyād ibn Ḥimār al-Mujashī' presented to him some thing. The Holy Prophet ﷺ enquired from him whether he was a Muslim, to which he replied in the negative. So he returned his presents, explaining that Allah Ta'ālā has commanded him not to accept presents from the disbelievers.

As against this there are other narrations reporting that the Holy Prophet ﷺ had accepted presents from some disbelievers. In one such narration, it is related that Abū Sufyān had presented to him a piece of leather when he was still a disbeliever, which the Holy Prophet ﷺ had accepted. Another narration has reported that a Christian had presented to him a very shiny piece of fine silk, which was also accepted by him.

Shamsul 'A'immah has commented after citing these narrations that, in his view, the reason of rejection and acceptance of these presents by the Holy Prophet ﷺ was that where he thought that by their rejection the disbeliever would come near Islam, he rejected them, and where he considered that their acceptance will help bring the disbeliever close to Islam he did that. ('Umdatul Qārī)

Bilqīs took the rejection of her presents by Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام as a sign of his prophethood - not because the acceptance of gifts from disbelievers is not permissible - but she had purposefully sent those presents as a bribe, in order to save herself from any attack from him.

Verses 38 - 41

قَالَ يَا أَيُّهَا الْمَلَأُوْا أَيُّكُمْ يَأْتِينِي بِعَرْشِهَا قَبْلَ أَنْ يَأْتُونِي مُسْلِمِينَ
 ﴿٣٨﴾ قَالَ عِفْرِيتٌ مِّنَ الْجِنِّ أَنَا آتِيكَ بِهِ قَبْلَ أَنْ تَقُومَ مِنْ مَّقَامِكَ ۖ
 وَإِنِّي عَلَيْهِ لَقَوِيٌّ أَمِينٌ ﴿٣٩﴾ قَالَ الَّذِي عِنْدَهُ عِلْمٌ مِّنَ الْكِتَابِ أَنَا
 آتِيكَ بِهِ قَبْلَ أَنْ يَرْتَدَّ إِلَيْكَ طَرْفُكَ ۚ فَلَمَّا رَآهُ مُسْتَقِرًّا عِنْدَهُ قَالَ هَذَا
 مِنْ فَضْلِ رَبِّي لِيَبْلُوَنِي ءَأَشْكُرُ أَمْ أَكْفُرُ ۚ وَمَنْ شَكَرَ فَإِنَّمَا يَشْكُرُ
 لِنَفْسِهِ وَمَنْ كَفَرَ فَإِنَّ رَبِّي غَنِيٌّ كَرِيمٌ ﴿٤٠﴾ قَالَ نَكُرُوا لَهَا عَرْشَهَا
 نَنْظُرَ أَتَهْتَدِيْ أَمْ تَكُونُ مِنَ الَّذِينَ لَا يَهْتَدُونَ ﴿٤١﴾

He said, "O chieftains, which one of you will bring her throne to me before they come to me submissively?" [38] An *'ifrit* (stalwart) from the Jinns said, "I will bring it to you before you rise up from your place, and for this (task) I am powerful, trust-worthy". [39] Said the one who had the knowledge of the book, "I will bring it to you before your glance returns to you." So when he saw it (the throne) well-placed before him, he said, "This is by the grace of my Lord, so that He may test me whether I am grateful or ungrateful. And whoever is grateful is grateful for his own benefit, and whoever is ungrateful, then my Lord is Need-Free, Bountiful". [40] He said, "Disguise the throne for her, and we will see whether she discovers the truth or she is one of those who have no guidance." [41]

Commentary

Bilqīs's appearance in the court of Sulaimān ﷺ

Qurtubī has reported, giving references of historical record, that Bilqīs's envoys returned from the court of Sulaimān ﷺ totally dumb-founded and awe-struck, and conveyed his declaration of war to the queen. Then Bilqīs said to her people that she was already of the view that he was no ordinary king, but was on some special assignment from God, and that fighting with His messenger is like fighting with God, for which they did not have the strength. After making this statement, she started getting ready to go to Sayyidnā Sulaimān ﷺ. She took along

with her twelve thousand chiefs, commanding an army of hundred thousand men each.¹ Allah Ta'ālā had graced Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام with such awe and majesty that no one had the courage to speak before him. One day he saw a cloud of dust at some distance. So he asked from those who were present as to what that was. His people answered 'O messenger of Allah! Queen Bilqīs is coming with her people'. Some narrations relate that at that time she was about three miles from the court of Sulaimān عليه السلام. At that moment Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام turned to his courtiers and asked them:

قَالَ يَا أَيُّهَا الْمَلَأُوْا إِلَيْكُمْ بِأَيِّئِيْ بِعَرْشِهَا قَبْلَ أَنْ يَأْتُونِيْ مُسْلِمِيْنَ

He said, "O chieftains, which one of you will bring her throne to me before they come to me submissively?" 27:38.

Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام was already informed that Bilqīs was coming to him to submit after having been impressed by his invitation. So he decided that, apart from royal grandeur, she should also witness a prophetic miracle, which should help her convert to faith. Allah Ta'ālā had bestowed the miracle of control of *jinn*s to Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام. After receiving the cue from Allah Ta'ālā, he fancied to have Bilqīs's throne brought to his court even before her arrival. So he commanded the jinni, who was also present in his court, to bring her throne. Selection of throne was presumably made on the basis that it was the most secured object of her treasure, which was kept in the impregnable inner most hall of the seven castles, one within the other, properly secured under lock. So much so that her own people could not reach there. Shifting of such a huge and secured object without breaking the lock or door to a place so far away from where it was placed, could not have been possible without the help and will of Allah Ta'ālā. This was an ideal way to make her see and realize the unlimited power and control of Allah. At the same time it was also intended to make her realize that the high position and status of

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1. The learned author has already mentioned that no authentic record is available on the details of this story. However there are some details found in the Israelite traditions some of which are reproduced here. This huge number of the army of Bilqīs is also taken from those traditions; otherwise, the number given is highly exaggerated on the face of it, and 'Allāmah 'Ālūsī has opined that the tradition giving such a huge number of the army seems to be a lie.

Sulaimān عليه السلام was actually bestowed by Allah Ta'ālā, which had enabled him to perform such super-human things. (Ibn Jarīr)

قَبْلَ أَنْ يَأْتُونِي مُسْلِمِينَ (before they come to me submissively - 27:38). The word مُسْلِمِينَ (*muslimīn*) is the plural of Muslim, the literal meaning of which is obedient or submissive. In conventional expression, 'Muslim' is equivalent of 'believer'. According to Sayyidnā ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه, here *Muslimīn* is used in its literal meaning, that is, obedient or submissive. It is so because it was not established at that time that Queen Bilqīs had converted to Islam. She actually converted to Islam after talking to Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام, as is evident from the verses to follow now.

قَالَ الَّذِي عِنْدَهُ عِلْمٌ مِّنَ الْكِتَابِ (Said the one who had the knowledge of the book - 27:40). The question is as to who was this person? One possibility is that he was Sulaimān عليه السلام himself, because his knowledge of the book of Allah was most extensive. In that case this incident happened as a miracle. The objective was also that Bilqīs should have an experience of the prophetic miracle, so that no doubt was left in her mind. But Ibn Jarīr has reported from many commentators of the Qur'ān, like Qatādah, that he was a person from the companions of Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام. Qurtubī has declared it to be the view of the majority. Ibn Ishaque has mentioned his name as 'Āṣif Ibn Barkhiyā, and has opined that he was a friend of Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام. Some other narrations say that a cousin of Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام had the knowledge of Al-Ism ul-A'ẓam, (a particular name of Allah Almighty) the speciality of which is that whatever blessing is invoked from Allah Ta'ālā by reciting this name, it is accepted, and anything requested is delivered from Him. It does not prove that Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام did not have the knowledge of Al-Ism-ul-A'ẓam. Rather it is quite likely that he considered it prudent to have the manifestation of the miracle by one of his people, which should have deeper impression on Bilqīs. Therefore, instead of performing the miracle himself, he addressed his people in the above manner. (كَذَا فِي) (فصوص الحکم) In such a situation, this incident was a Karāmah, which was performed by 'Āṣif Ibn Barkhiyā.

Difference between miracle and Karāmah

Miracles take place without any involvement of natural phenomena by the exclusive act and will of Allah Ta'ālā. It is clearly defined in the Qur'ān itself وَمَا رَمَيْتَ إِذْ رَمَيْتَ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ رَمَى (You did not throw when you threw

but Allah did throw - 8:17). Likewise, there is no involvement of natural phenomena in the happening of Karāmah. They take place exclusively with the act and will of Allah Ta'ālā. This should also be understood that miracles and Karāmah do not take place with the wish or control of the person performing them, but only by the will and act of Allah Ta'ālā. The only difference between the two is that if such an unusual act is demonstrated through a prophet, it is known as a miracle; and if it is demonstrated through someone who is not a prophet, it is called Karāmah. In this particular incident if it is correct that 'Āṣif Ibn Barkhiyā, who was a companion of Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام, performed it, then it will be called his Karāmah. The unusual acts performed by saints are in fact the reflection of the perfections of their prophets, which in turn are deemed to be the miracles of their prophet.

The incident of the throne of Bilqīs was a Karāmah or a Taṣarruf

Shaikh Muḥiyyuddīn ibn al-'Arabī has declared it as a Taṣarruf of 'Āṣif ibn Barkhiyā. In the general use of the term, Taṣarruf means to captivate the audience by the power of sight and mind, for which it is not necessary for the person performing it that he is a prophet or saint or even a Muslim. It is something like mesmerism or hypnotism. The saints have used this power occasionally for reforming and training of their disciples also. Ibn al-'Arabī has explained that since prophets avoid using Taṣarruf, therefore Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام got this job done by 'Āṣif ibn Barkhiyā. But the Qur'an has declared it the result of عِلْمٌ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ (The knowledge of the book - 27:40). In the light of the wordings of the Qur'an, it seems preferable that it was an outcome of some prayer or of Al-Ism ul-A'ẓam which falls within the purview of Karāmah, and has nothing to do with Taṣarruf.

The assertion اَنَا اِيْتِكَ بِهِ قَبْلَ اَنْ يَرْتَدَّ اِلَيْكَ طَرْفُكَ (I will bring it to you before your glance returns to you - 27:40) may create confusion, because it gives the impression that this act was carried out with intent and control. That being so, it is a sign of Taṣarruf, because Karāmah is not under the control of a saint. The answer to this doubt is that presumably Allah Ta'ālā had already given the signal that if there would be a desire for that, He would fulfill it in no time.

This explanation is taken from the commentary 'Aḥkam ul Qur'an' by Sayyidī Ḥakīm ul Ummah Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thanawī, on Sūrah

An-Naml. Apart from that, he has also written a pamphlet on Taṣarruf in Arabic under the title 'At-Taṣarruf', which I have translated in Urdu and has been published separately.

Verses 42 - 44

فَلَمَّا جَاءَتْ قِيلَ أَهَكَذَا عَرْشُكَ ۖ قَالَتْ كَأَنَّهُ هُوَ ۖ وَأُوتِينَا الْعِلْمَ
مِنْ قَبْلِهَا وَكُنَّا مُسْلِمِينَ ﴿٤٢﴾ وَصَدَّهَا مَا كَانَتْ تَعْبُدُ مِنْ دُونِ
اللَّهِ ۖ إِنَّهَا كَانَتْ مِنْ قَوْمٍ كَافِرِينَ ﴿٤٣﴾ قِيلَ لَهَا ادْخُلِي الصَّرْحَ ۖ
فَلَمَّا رَأَتْهُ حَسِبَتْهُ لُجَّةً وَكَشَفَتْ عَنْ سَاقَيْهَا ۖ قَالَ إِنَّهُ صَرْحٌ مُّمَرَّدٌ
مِّنْ قَوَارِيرَ ۖ قَالَتْ رَبِّ إِنِّي ظَلَمْتُ نَفْسِي ۖ وَأَسْلَمْتُ مَعَ سُلَيْمَانَ
لِّلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٤٤﴾

So when she came, it was said (to her), "Is your throne like this?" She said, "It seems to be the same, and knowledge (of truth) was given to us even before this and we have already submitted." [42] And she was prevented (from submitting before) by that which she used to worship instead of Allah. Indeed she was from a disbelieving people. [43] It was said to her, "Enter the palace." Then once she saw it, she thought it to be flowing water and uncovered her legs. He (Sulaimān) said, "This is a palace made of glasses." She said, "My Lord, I had surely wronged myself, and now I submit, alongwith Sulaimān, to Allah, the Lord of the worlds."

[44]

Commentary

Did Sayyidnā Sulaimān ﷺ marry Bilqīs?

The story of Bilqīs has ended in the above verses on the statement that she converted to Islam after coming to Sayyidnā Sulaimān ﷺ. What happened after that? The Qur'ān is silent on this. It is for this reason that when someone asked 'Abdullāh ibn 'Uyaynah whether Sayyidnā Sulaimān ﷺ had married Bilqīs, he answered that her case has finished on this أَسْلَمْتُ مَعَ سُلَيْمَانَ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (I submit, alongwith Sulaimān, to Allah, the Lord of the worlds - 44). The idea behind this

answer was that when Qur'ān has not divulged anything after that, it is not for us to probe any further. But Ibn 'Asākir has reported on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Ikrimah رضي الله عنه that Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام had married Bilqīs after that, and she was retained as the sovereign of her country. She was then sent back to Yemen, and Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام, used to visit her every month for three days. He got three palaces made for her in Yemen, which had no parallel of their kind. (Only God knows best)

Verses 45 - 53

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا إِلَى ثَمُودَ أَخَاهُمْ صَالِحًا أَنْ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ فَإِذَا هُمْ فَرِيقَيْنِ يَخْتَصِمُونَ ﴿٤٥﴾ قَالَ يَقَوْمِ لِمَ تَسْتَعْجِلُونَ بِالسَّيِّئَةِ قَبْلَ الْحَسَنَةِ ۚ لَوْلَا تَسْتَغْفِرُونَ اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ ﴿٤٦﴾ قَالُوا اطَّيَّرْنَا بِكَ وَبِمَنْ مَعَكَ ۚ قَالَ طَائِرُكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ بَلْ أَنْتُمْ قَوْمٌ تُفْتَنُونَ ﴿٤٧﴾ وَكَانَ فِي الْمَدِينَةِ تِسْعَةُ رَهْطٍ يُفْسِدُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا يُصْلِحُونَ ﴿٤٨﴾ قَالُوا تَقَاسَمُوا بِاللَّهِ لَنُبَيِّتَنَّهُ وَأَهْلَهُ، ثُمَّ لَنَقُولَنَّ لِوَلِيِّهِ مَا شَهِدْنَا مَهْلِكَ أَهْلِهِ وَإِنَّا لَصَادِقُونَ ﴿٤٩﴾ وَمَكَرُوا مَكْرًا وَمَكَرْنَا مَكْرًا وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿٥٠﴾ فَانْظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ مُكْرِهِمْ ۚ أَنَادَرْنَاهُمْ وَقَوْمَهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ ﴿٥١﴾ فَتِلْكَ بَيُوتُهُمْ خَاوِيَةٌ بِمَا ظَلَمُوا ۗ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٥٢﴾ وَانجَيْنَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَكَانُوا يَتَّقُونَ ﴿٥٣﴾

And We sent to Thamūd their brother Ṣāliḥ saying (to them), "Worship Allah". Then suddenly they became two groups quarrelling with each other. [45] He said, "O my people, why do you seek evil to come sooner before good? Why do you not seek forgiveness from Allah, so that you are treated with mercy?" [46] They said, "We regard you and those with you as a sign of bad omen." He said, "Your omen is with Allah, but you are a people

put to a test." [47]

And there were nine persons in the city who used to make mischief on the earth and did not put things right. [48] They said, "Let us swear a mutual oath by Allah that we shall attack him (Ṣāliḥ) and his family at night, then will say to his heir, 'We did not witness the destruction of his family and we are really truthful.'" [49] And (thus) they devised a plan and We devised a plan, while they were not aware. [50] So look how was the fate of their plan, that We annihilated them and their people altogether. [51] Now those are their houses, lying empty because of the transgression they committed. Surely, in this there are signs for a people who have knowledge. [52] And We saved those who believed and who used to be God-fearing. [53]

Commentary

لِمَ تَسْعَاجِلُونَ بِالسَّيِّئَةِ قَبْلَ الْحَسَنَةِ (why do you seek evil to come sooner before good? - 27:46). Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ (عليه السلام) is referring here to the demand of the infidels that he should bring the divine torment to them in this world, so that they may know his truthfulness. Therefore, "evil" in this sentence stands for torment, while "good" refers to their repentance and invoking divine mercy. It, therefore means, "Why are you asking me to bring the divine punishment before you repent?"

تِسْعَةُ رَهْطٍ (nine persons - 27:48). The word رَهْط (Raḥṭ) is used for a group. Here each of the nine persons is called Raḥṭ presumably because they were regarded superior among their clan for having wealth and dignity. Each one of them had his own separate group of people, hence they are called nine groups. They were known as the chiefs of Ḥijr, which was a city of the people of Ṣāliḥ (عليه السلام). Ḥijr was a well-known city of Syria.

لَنَبِيتَنَّهُ، وَأَهْلَهُ، ثُمَّ لَنَقُولَنَّ لِوَلِيِّهِ مَا شَهِدْنَا مَهْلِكَ أَهْلِهِ وَإِنَّا لَصٰدِقُونَ

We shall attack him (Ṣāliḥ) and his family at night, then will say to his heir, We did not witness the destruction of his family and we are really truthful - 27:49.

The plan was that all of them together should attack him and his companions in the darkness of night, and kill them all. And when the claimant of the blood would make the claim, they would say that they did

not kill him, and also they did not know who had killed him. In saying so they would have uttered the truth because no one could have known who had killed whom in the darkness of the night.

The point to note here is that all the acts of infidelity, disbelief, killing and pillage were being performed by the infidels, rather than those among them who were hardened criminals. Yet they were careful that they don't speak a lie or get blamed for falsehood. This shows how great the sin of falsehood is, that even the perpetrators of heinous crimes avoid it for the sake of their self-respect.

The other thing worth noting in this verse is that the one whom these infidels had mentioned as the Walī or heir of Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ (عليه السلام) was a man of his own family. So, why did they leave him out from being assassinated? The answer to this question is that he might have been the successor from the lineage point of view, but otherwise he could be an infidel and be a party with the infidels. There could have been the consideration that he might claim the compensation for the blood of Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ (عليه السلام) because of his relationship with him. The other possibility is that he might have been a Muslim but enjoyed a prominent position and hence there could have been the risk of uprising and reprisal among the people. Only Allah knows best.

Verses 54 - 59

وَلَوْ طَا إِذْ قَالَ لِقَوْمِهِ أَتَأْتُونَ الْفَاحِشَةَ وَأَنْتُمْ تُبْصِرُونَ ﴿٥٤﴾ إِنَّكُمْ لَتَأْتُونَ الرِّجَالَ شَهْوَةً مِنْ دُونِ النِّسَاءِ ۖ بَلْ أَنْتُمْ قَوْمٌ تَجْهَلُونَ ﴿٥٥﴾ فَمَا كَانَ جَوَابَ قَوْمِهِ إِلَّا أَنْ قَالُوا أَخْرِجُوهُ أَلْ لَوْطِ مِنْ قَرْيَتِكُمْ ۚ إِنَّهُمْ أَنْاسٌ يَتَطَهَّرُونَ ﴿٥٦﴾ فَأَنْجَيْنَاهُ وَأَهْلَهُ إِلَّا امْرَأَتَهُ ۖ قَدَرْنَاهَا مِنَ الْغَابِرِينَ ﴿٥٧﴾ وَأَمْطَرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ مَطَرًا ۚ فَسَاءَ مَطَرُ الْمُنْذَرِينَ ﴿٥٨﴾ قُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ وَسَلَامٌ عَلَى عِبَادِهِ الَّذِينَ اصْطَفَى ۖ اللَّهُ خَيْرٌ أَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ ﴿٥٩﴾

And (We sent) Lūṭ when he said to his people, "Do you

commit the shameful act while you can see (its shamelessness)? [54] Is it that you really come to men lustfully instead of women? No, you are a people committing acts of ignorance." [55] So, the answer of his people was not but that they said, "Expel the family of Lūṭ from your town. They are a people who over-indulge in purity." [56] So We saved him and his family, except his wife. We destined her to remain among those who stayed behind. [57] And We rained on them a rain. So evil was the rain of those who were warned. [58]

Say, "Praise belongs to Allah, and peace be on those of His slaves whom He has chosen." Is Allah better or that which they associate (with Him as His partners)? [59]

Commentary

This incident has been related at many places in the Qur'ān, especially in Sūrah Al-A'rāf, where its necessary details have been discussed and may be consulted if required.

قُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ (Say, "Praise belongs to Allah - 27:59). After describing some events of the prophets and earlier people, and the episodes of torments they faced, this sentence is addressed to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, that he should express his gratitude to Allah Ta'ālā, for his followers have been exempted from the punishment in this world. He ﷺ is further asked to say *salām* to the earlier prophets and God-fearing persons. Majority of the commentators have adopted this explanation, but some feel that this sentence is also addressed to Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام.

It appears that the expression الَّذِينَ اصْطَفَى (His slaves whom He has chosen - 27:59) is used in this verse for the prophets, like in another verse *salām* has been addressed to the prophets, وَسَلَامٌ عَلَى الْمُرْسَلِينَ (And *salām* is on the messengers - 37:181). But Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه is of the opinion that it refers to the companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. This explanation is also adopted by Sufyān Ath-Thaurī. (Ibn Jarīr)

If the explanation of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه is adopted and the meaning of الَّذِينَ اصْطَفَى - 27:59 is taken for the companions, then there will be a case for saying "*Alaihis Salām*" to non-prophets also. This subject will be discussed in detail *Inshallah* under Sūrah Al-Aḥzāb for the verse

صَلُّوا عَلَيْهِ وَسَلِّمُوا (33:56).

Ruling

This verse also teaches the formalities of an address, a sermon or a lecture, that it should start with the praise of Allah and the *ṣalāh* (*durood*) and *salām* to the prophets. This had always been the practice of the Holy Prophet ﷺ in his addresses. His companions also adopted the same practice by commencing not only their addresses but also all the important jobs by praising Allah Ta'ālā and then *ṣalāh* and *salām* on the Holy Prophet ﷺ. (Rūḥ).

Verses 60 - 64

أَمَّنْ خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَأَنْزَلَ لَكُمْ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً ۖ فَأَنْبَتْنَا
بِهِ حَدَائِقَ ۚ ذَاتَ بَهْجَةٍ ۚ مَا كَانَ لَكُمْ أَنْ تُنبِتُوا شَجَرَهَا ۗ ؕ إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ
الَّذِينَ ۖ بَلْ هُمْ قَوْمٌ يَعْدِلُونَ ﴿٦٠﴾ أَمَّنْ جَعَلَ الْأَرْضَ قَرَارًا وَجَعَلَ
خِلَالَهَا أَنْهَارًا وَجَعَلَ لَهَا رَوَاسِيَ وَجَعَلَ بَيْنَ الْبَحْرَيْنِ حَاجِزًا ۗ ؕ إِنَّ اللَّهَ
مَعَ الَّذِينَ ۖ بَلْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٦١﴾ أَمَّنْ يُجِيبُ الْمُضْطَرَّ إِذَا
دَعَاهُ وَيَكْشِفُ السُّوءَ وَيَجْعَلُكُمْ خُلَفَاءَ الْأَرْضِ ۗ ؕ إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ ۖ
قَلِيلًا مَّا تَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٦٢﴾ أَمَّنْ يَهْدِيكُمْ فِي ظُلُمَاتِ الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ وَمَنْ
يُرْسِلُ الرِّيحَ بُشْرًا ۖ بَيْنَ يَدَيْ رَحْمَتِهِ ۗ ؕ إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ ۖ تَعْلَى اللَّهُ عَمَّا
يُشْرِكُونَ ﴿٦٣﴾ أَمَّنْ يَبْدَأُ الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيدُهُ وَمَنْ يَرْزُقُكُمْ مِّنَ
السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۗ ؕ إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ ۖ قُلْ هَاتُوا بُرْهَانَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ
صَادِقِينَ ﴿٦٤﴾

Or the One who created the heavens and the earth and sent down for you water from the sky? Then We caused to grow with it gardens, full of glamor. It was not within your ability to grow their trees. Is there any god alongwith Allah? No, but they are a people who equate (others with Allah). [60]

Or the One who made the earth a place to settle and made rivers amidst it and made mountains for (making) it (firm), and made a barrier between two seas. Is there any god alongwith Allah? No, but most of them do not have knowledge. [61] Or the One who responds to a helpless person when He prays to Him and removes distress, and who makes you vicegerents of the earth. Is there any god alongwith Allah? No, but little you take lesson. [62] Or the One who guides you in depths of darkness on land and sea, and who sends the winds bearing good news before His mercy? Is there any god alongwith Allah? Allah is far higher than the *shirk* they commit. [63] Or the One who originated creation, then will reproduce it, and who gives you provision from the sky and the earth? Is there any god alongwith Allah? Say, "Bring your proof if you are true." [64]

Commentary

أَمَّنْ يُجِيبُ الْمُضْطَرَّ إِذَا دَعَاهُ وَيَكْشِفُ السُّوءَ

(Or the One who responds to a helpless when he prays to Him and removes distress - 27:62)

Word *الْمُضْطَرَّ* (*Muḍṭar*) is derived from *إِضْطَرَّ* (*Idṭirār*), which means to be helpless and restless under some necessity, and that happens when someone does not have any support and friends. Hence, *Muḍṭar* is that person who has lost all hopes from everyone and has turned to Allah as the sole redresser of his woes. This explanation of *Muḍṭar* is adopted by Suddī, Dhun-nūn Al-Miṣrī, Sahl ibn ‘Abdullāh etc. (Qurtubī). The Holy Prophet ﷺ has advised that such a person should supplicate in the following manner.

اللَّهُمَّ رَحْمَتَكَ أَرْجُوا، فَلَا تَكِلْنِي إِلَى نَفْسِي طَرْفَةَ عَيْنٍ، وَأَصْلِحْ لِي شَأْنِي كُلَّهُ، لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ

‘O Allah, I am an aspirant of your grace. So, please do not leave me at the mercy of myself for a moment, and set right all my matters on Your own. There is no god except You’. (Qurtubī)

Supplication of a *Muḍṭar* is surely accepted because of its sincerity

Imām Qurtubī has said that Allah Ta‘ālā has taken upon Himself to accept the supplication of a *Muḍṭar*. He has made declaration to this

effect in this verse. The main reason for it is that by divorcing all mundane supports and connections, beseeching from Allah, while regarding Him as the sole redresser is the sincerity at its best. Sincerity has a special position before Allah Ta'ālā. Whoever evinces sincerity, no matter if he is a believer or an infidel, a pious or a sinner, because of the auspiciousness of sincerity the divine favour gets attentive towards him. Allah Ta'ālā Himself elaborates this point while describing the traits of the infidels. He has said that when they are in water and the boat is caught in storm, and they are sure of their death, they call out to Allah with all sincerity, saying that they would be thankful to Him forever if He would save their lives. But when Allah Ta'ālā rescues them and brings them to land by accepting their supplication, they again indulge in associating Him with gods دَعَا إِلَهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ (الى قوله) فَلَمَّا نَجَّاهُمْ إِلَى الْبَرِّ إِذَا هُمْ يُشْرِكُونَ .

A Ṣaḥīḥ *ḥadīth* of the Holy Prophet ﷺ says that 'Three supplications are surely accepted, in which there is no room for doubt. One, from an oppressed person, two, by a traveler, and three, from a father against his children'. After citing this *ḥadīth*, Qurtubī has commented that in all these three cases the situation is the same as the supplication of a *Muḍṭar*, because when an oppressed person calls Allah after having been frustrated from mundane support and help, his condition is no different than that of a *Muḍṭar*. Similarly, a traveler is away from his dear ones, hence helpless, while in journey. Likewise, a father cannot plead for something against his children because of his paternal love and affection for them, unless he is totally dejected and heart-broken, and calls Allah to save himself from the misery of sufferings. 'Ajurri, a scholar of *ḥadīth*, has quoted on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Dharr ؓ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said 'Allah Ta'ālā has pronounced that He shall never reject an appeal from an oppressed person, even if it is made by an infidel'. (Qurtubī) If a *Muḍṭar* or an oppressed person or a traveler has a feeling that his appeal to Allah has not been accepted, he should not be dejected and be skeptical, because sometimes the request is accepted but its manifestation is delayed due to some expediency and divine wisdom. As an alternative, such a person should search his soul to find out if there was any deficiency in his sincerity or concentration while praying to Allah Ta'ālā. (Only Allah knows best)

Verses 65 - 75

قُلْ لَا يَعْلَمُ مَنْ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ الْغَيْبَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ ۗ وَمَا يَشْعُرُونَ أَيَّانَ يُبْعَثُونَ ﴿٦٥﴾ بَلِ ادْرَكَ عِلْمُهُمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ ۗ بَلْ هُمْ فِي شَكٍّ مِّنْهَا ۚ بَلْ هُمْ مِّنْهَا عَمُونَ ﴿٦٦﴾ وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِذَا كُنَّا تُرَابًا وَآبَاءُنَا إِنَّا لَمُخْرَجُونَ ﴿٦٧﴾ لَقَدْ وَعَدْنَا هَذَا نَحْنُ وَآبَاءُنَا مِن قَبْلُ ۚ إِنَّ هَذَا إِلَّا أَسَاطِيرُ الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿٦٨﴾ قُلْ سِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَانظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُجْرِمِينَ ﴿٦٩﴾ وَلَا تَحْزَنْ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا تَكُنْ فِي ضَيْقٍ مِّمَّا يَمْكُرُونَ ﴿٧٠﴾ وَيَقُولُونَ مَتَى هَذَا الْوَعْدُ إِن كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿٧١﴾ قُلْ عَسَىٰ أَن يَكُونَ رَدِفَ لَكُمْ بَعْضُ الَّذِي تَسْتَعْجِلُونَ ﴿٧٢﴾ وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَذُو فَضْلٍ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَلَٰكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٧٣﴾ وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَيَعْلَمُ مَا تُكِنُّ صُدُورُهُمْ وَمَا يُعْلِنُونَ ﴿٧٤﴾ وَمَا مِنْ غَائِبَةٍ فِي السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ إِلَّا فِي كِتَابٍ مُّبِينٍ ﴿٧٥﴾

Say, "No one in the heavens and the earth has the knowledge of the Unseen except Allah." And they do not know when they will be raised again. [65] Rather, their knowledge failed in the matter of Hereafter. Rather, they are in doubt about it. Rather, they are blind to it. [66] And said those who disbelieved, "Is it, when we and our fathers become dust, shall we really be brought forth? [67] Indeed, it was promised to us and to our fathers before. This is nothing but the tales of the ancients." [68] Say, "Travel in the land and see how was the fate of the sinners. [69] And do not grieve for them and do not be straitened because of what they plan. [70]

And they say, "When shall this promise come (to pass) if you are true?" [71] Say, "It is not unlikely that some part of that (punishment) which you seek to come soon is already following you closely." [72] And surely, your

Lord is graceful for the mankind, but most of the people are not grateful. [73] And surely your Lord knows for sure what their hearts conceal and what they reveal. [74] And there is nothing hidden in the heavens and the earth that is not (recorded) in a manifest book. [75]

Commentary

قُلْ لَا يَعْلَمُ مَنْ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ الْغَيْبَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ

Say, "No one in the heavens and the earth has the knowledge of Unseen except Allah." - 27:65

The Holy Prophet ﷺ was instructed to tell people that all the creatures that live in the heavens, like angels, and all the creatures that live in this world, like humans and jinns, none of them have any knowledge of the unseen (*ghayb*) except Allah. In the above-referred verse it has been stated very clearly that it is an exclusive attribute of Allah Ta'ālā, and no one else, not even an angel or a prophet, could share this attribute. This subject has been dealt with in detail under verse No. 59 of Sūrah al-An'ām on page No.360 in the 3rd volume. In addition to that, I have written a separate treatise on the subject under the title (كشف الريب عن علم الغيب) which has been published in my book Aḥkām-ul-Qur'an in arabic. Those who are interested in this subject can refer to that.

بَلْ اِدْرَاكَ عِلْمُهُمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ ۚ بَلْ هُمْ فِي شَكٍّ مِنْهَا ۚ بَلْ هُمْ عَنْهَا عُمُونَ

Rather, their knowledge failed in the matter of Hereafter.
Rather, they are in doubt about it. Rather, they are blind to it.
27:66.

There are different recitations for the word اِدْرَاكَ (*iddāraka*) and their meanings are also different. Those who are interested should refer to different commentaries for the details. It is enough to understand here that some commentators have taken it to mean "completion" and have explained the verse thus: "Their knowledge and understanding will be completed in the Hereafter", because then the truth about every thing shall be laid bare. But knowledge of truth at that time will be of no avail, because they had been contradicting the Hereafter in the world. But some other commentators have taken the word in the meaning of 'having failed' and 'having been lost'. The sense in this case would be that their knowledge about the Hereafter was lost, and they could not understand

what it was.

Verses 76 - 79

إِنَّ هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ يَقْضِي عَلَىٰ بَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ أَكْثَرَ الَّذِي هُمْ فِيهِ
يَخْتَلِفُونَ ﴿٧٦﴾ وَإِنَّهُ لَهْدَىٰ وَرَحْمَةٌ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٧٧﴾ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ
يَقْضِي بَيْنَهُم بِحُكْمِهِ ۚ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْعَلِيمُ ﴿٧٨﴾ فَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ
إِنَّكَ عَلَى الْحَقِّ الْمُبِينِ ﴿٧٩﴾

Surely this Qur'ān mentions to the children of Isrā'īl most of the matters in which they dispute. [76] And it is guidance and mercy for the believers. [77] And surely your Lord will decide between them by His judgment, and He is the All-Mighty, All-Knowing. [78] So trust in Allah. Surely you are on the open truth. [79]

Commentary

By describing Allah's omnipotence through different examples in the earlier verses, the reality of the Hereafter and the rational possibility of resurrection of the dead has been established. There is no logical ambiguity in that. Its definite occurrence is confirmed by the sayings of the prophets and the divine books that were revealed to them. Authenticity and establishment of any information is based on the veracity of the courier or the narrator. In this verse it is stated that the informant of this news is the Holy Qur'ān whose authenticity and truthfulness is beyond any doubt or contradiction. So much so that in matters in which the scholars of Banī Isrā'īl had differed strongly and could not resolve them, the Qur'ān has given them evaluated verdict to follow for correct judgment. It is but obvious that in matters where there is difference of opinion among the scholars, the only competent authority to overrule is the one who is superior in knowledge and status. Therefore, it is established that Qur'ān is an authentic informant. After this the Holy Prophet ﷺ was consoled that he need not be despondent over their antagonism. 'Allah Ta'ālā is to make judgment Himself in his case. He should have faith in Allah, because Allah's help and aid is with the truth. And there is no doubt that he is on the right path'. (Verse 79).

Verses 80 - 81

إِنَّكَ لَا تَسْمِعُ الْمَوْتَى وَلَا تَسْمِعُ الصُّمَّ الدُّعَاءَ إِذَا وَلَّوْا مُدْبِرِينَ
 ﴿٨٠﴾ وَمَا أَنْتَ بِهَادِيَ الْعُمَى عَنْ ضَلَّتِهِمْ ۚ إِنَّ تَسْمِعَ إِلَّا مَنْ
 يُؤْمِنُ بِآيَاتِنَا فَهُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ ﴿٨١﴾

Surely, you cannot make the dead hear, nor can you make the deaf hear your call when they turn their backs in retreat, [80] nor can you show the right path to the blind ones against their wandering astray. You can make no one listen (to you) except those who believe in Our verses, then submit themselves (to Allah). [81]

Commentary

It was the demand of love and affection the Holy Prophet ﷺ had for all human beings that he should save them all from the fire of *jahannam* by making them accept the message of Allah. It used to hurt him a lot if someone did not accept it. He used to feel as if someone's children were proceeding toward the fire by not heeding to the advice of his parents. Therefore, Qur'an has adopted different expressions to console him at many places. One such advice was contained in the sentence وَلَا تَحْزَنْ عَلَيْهِمْ (And do not grieve for them, and do not be straitened because of what they plan - 27:70) which has appeared in the earlier verse. In the above verse he has been consoled in a slightly different manner, that his job was only to convey the message of truth, which he had done admirably. If someone had not accepted this, it was not his fault or deficiency. So, he need not worry and be despondent. Rather it is their own fault that they have lost their sense of direction. Qur'an has described the loss of their sense of direction by presenting three examples. First, that they were like dead bodies in the matter of acceptance of truth, and thus cannot take any one's advice to their advantage. Second, that they were like the deaf man who does not wish to hear anything, rather they turn their back and go away if someone tries to give them any advice. Third, that they were like the blind that cannot see even if someone tries to show them the path. After providing these three examples it is said:

إِنْ تُسْمِعُ إِلَّا مَنْ يُؤْمِنُ بِآيَاتِنَا فَهُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ

You can make no one listen (to you) except those who believe in Our verses, then submit themselves (to Allah). 27:81.

It is very clear that in the subject under discussion it is not purported to make the voice reach the listener, but what is intended here is that what is conveyed should be beneficial to the addressee. The Qur'an has defined the audition as non-audition if it is not beneficial from the objective point of view. This point is elaborated at the end of the verse where it is stated that you can cause to hear only those who are willing to believe. Should it mean to make them hear only, then the statement of the Qur'an would have been contrary to facts and observations, because there are many undeniable proofs that divine message was conveyed to the disbelievers, which they not only listened but also answered to reject. It is therefore, quite clear that here causing to hear means the understanding which is beneficial. Then by calling them as dead bodies, it is further emphasized that you cannot make them realize the truth, because even if the dead could hear and wish to accept the truth, it would not be to their avail. The dead have passed through the worldly life, where faith and good deeds did matter. After the death, both in Barzakh and the Hereafter, all infidels and disbelievers would wish for faith and righteous deeds, but then it would be too late. This statement of the verse does not bear out that the dead cannot hear. In fact this verse is silent on the subject of hearing by the dead. This subject needs separate study which follows:

Can the dead persons hear?

The issue, whether the dead can hear or not, was one of the subjects on which the exalted companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ had different points of view. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar ؓ has declared the hearing of the dead as established, but Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها has negated this understanding. Because of this difference of opinion there are two groups among the companions and the *tabi'īn* (generation next to them). Some believe that the dead do hear, while others deny it. This subject is mentioned in the Qur'an at three places. One is the same as referred above in Sūrah An-Naml. The other is in Sūrah Ar-Rūm with almost similar wordings, and in Sūrah Al-Fāṭir it has appeared with these words وَمَا أَنْتَ بِمُسْمِعٍ مَّنْ فِي الْقُبُورِ, that is, 'You cannot cause those who are in

the graves to hear'. It is worth noting in all the three verses that none of them has declared that the dead cannot hear. The expression used in each one of the three verses is that 'you cannot cause them to hear'. The consistent expression used in all the three verses seems to be a clear indication that the dead may have the ability to hear but we cannot cause them to listen to us.

As against these three verses, another verse relating to martyrs reveals that they are bestowed with a special type of life in their graves. In this special life they also get food and are conveyed good tidings from Allah Ta'ālā about their dear ones. The verse reads as:

وَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ قُتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَمْوَاتًا ۚ بَلْ أَحْيَاءٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ يُرْزَقُونَ ﴿١٦٩﴾
فَرِحِينَ بِمَا آتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ ۚ وَيَسْتَبْشِرُونَ بِالَّذِينَ لَمْ يَلْحَقُوا بِهِمْ مِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ ۚ أَلَّا
خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ﴿١٧٠﴾

And never take those killed in the way of Allah as dead. Rather they are alive, with their Lord, well-provided, happy with what Allah has given them of His grace; and they feel pleased with the good news, about those who after them could not join them, that there shall be no fear for them, nor shall they grieve. (3:169-170)

This verse corroborates that even after death some intellect and perception may be left behind in the human spirit. Rather in the case of martyrs there is a hint that such a thing does happen. As for the argument that this position relates only to the martyrs, to whom the verse refers, and not to the ordinary dead, its answer is that at least it tells that after death some intellect and perception and understanding of the world may be left behind in the human spirit. The way Allah Ta'ālā has bestowed upon martyrs the honour of maintaining the connection of their spirits with their bodies and graves, He can also grace the other dead with the same ability. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Umar رضي الله عنه, holds the view that dead do hear. This view is based on a Ṣaḥīḥ *ḥadīth*, which is reported by Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar رضي الله عنه. It is as follows:

مَا مِنْ أَحَدٍ يَمُرُّ بِقَبْرِ أَخِيهِ الْمُسْلِمِ كَانَ يَعْرِفُهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا فَيَسَلِّمُ عَلَيْهِ إِلَّا رَدَّ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ
رُوحَهُ حَتَّى يَرُدَّ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ (ذكره ابن كثير في تفسيره مصححاً عن ابن عمر)

'When a person passes by the grave of a Muslim brother whom he knew when he was alive and he offers *salām* to him, Allah Ta'ālā returns his spirit into his body, so that he may return

the *salām*'. (Ibn Kathīr, declaring it as *Ṣaḥīḥ*)

This also proves that when a person visits the grave of a Muslim brother and offers him his *salām*, the dead listens to his *salām* and answers back. It happens like this that Allah Ta'ālā returns the spirit of the dead back to this world momentarily. It confirms two points. One, that dead can hear, and second, that their hearing and our causing them to hear is not in our control, but is dependent entirely on Allah's will. Whenever He wills, they can hear and whenever He does not will, they do not hear. The above-referred *ḥadīth* has made it clear that Allah Ta'ālā is gracious to let the dead hear the *salām* of a Muslim brother, and also grants him privilege to answer back. But for any other situation or utterance it is not known whether the dead can hear or not. The research carried out by Imām Ghazzālī and Allāmah Subki also corroborates that it is established by this Qur'ānic verse and *Ṣaḥīḥ āḥādīth* that under certain conditions the dead do hear the utterance of the living, but it is not known whether every dead person hears the utterance at all times of all those who are living. This also makes the Qur'ānic verse and narrations on the subject comparable. It is quite possible that the dead could hear the utterance of the living at certain times and could not hear at others. This is also possible that they may hear the utterance of some and do not hear of others. Yet there is another possibility that some dead could hear and others could not. It is also established by the verses of Sūrahs An-Naml, Ar-Rūm and Fāṭir that it is not under the control of human beings to cause the dead to hear; rather it rests with Allah alone to make them hear whenever He wills. Therefore, where it is established by the *Ṣaḥīḥ āḥādīth* that the dead did hear, we should believe it; and where it is not established, both the situations are possible. Hence, we should neither accept nor deny it. For further details of the subject, my treatise on the subject may be consulted. This treatise is in Arabic and is included in *Aḥkām-ul-Qur'ān*.

Verse 82

وَإِذَا وَقَعَ الْقَوْلُ عَلَيْهِمْ أَخْرَجْنَا لَهُمْ دَابَّةً مِّنَ الْأَرْضِ تُكَلِّمُهُمْ ۚ أَنَّ
النَّاسَ كَانُوا بِآيَاتِنَا لَا يُوقِنُونَ ﴿٨٢﴾

And when the word will come to fall upon them, We will bring forth for them a beast from the earth who will speak to them that the human beings (i.e the infidels) did not believe in Our verses. [82]

Commentary

The nature of the beast coming out of the earth, and its time and place

It is reported in Musnād of Aḥmad on the authority of Sayyidnā Ḥudhaifah ؓ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said that the Doomsday would not come until you witness ten signs of it. They are:

- (1) Appearance of the sun from the west.
- (2) Dukhān (Smoke).
- (3) Dābba-tul-arḍ, i.e the beast coming out of the earth
- (4) Coming out of Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj.
- (5) Descent of Sayyidnā 'Īsā ؑ.
- (6) Dajjāl.

7, 8, 9) Three lunar eclipses together – one in the west, second in the east and the third in the peninsula of Arabia.

10) A fire, that will emerge from the Gulf of Aden and drive every one towards the plain of *maḥshar*; wherever people will stop for the rest at night, the fire will also stop there, and will drive them again the next day. (Muslim, Tirmidhī)

This *ḥadīth* has informed us of the emergence of such an animal close to Doomsday that will talk to human beings. The *Tanvīn* of the word *Dābbah* indicates that this animal will be extra-ordinary. This animal will not be born by the normal way of propagation; instead, it will emerge from the ground all of a sudden. There is an allusion in this *ḥadīth* that the emergence of this animal would be one of the very last signs, after which the Doomsday will follow soon. Ibn Kathīr has reported in a lengthy *ḥadīth* on the authority of Sayyidnā Ṭalḥah ibn 'Umar ؓ through Abū Dāwūd Ṭayālīsī that this beast will emerge in Makkah from the mount of *Ṣafā*, and after cleaning the dust from its head will reach at a point between the Black Stone (Al-Ḥajar-al-Aswad) and the Station of Ibrāhīm (Maqām Ibrāhīm). Seeing this creature, people will start running helter-skelter. Only one group of people will stay behind. Then

the beast will make their faces glitter like stars. After that it will go out in the world, and put a sign of infidelity on the face of every infidel. No one will be able to get out of its grasp. It will recognize every believer and the infidel (Ibn Kathīr). And Muslim Ibn Ḥajjāj has reported on the authority of Sayyidnā ‘Abdullāh Ibn ‘Umar ؓ that he had heard the Holy Prophet ﷺ saying, which he did not forget, that among the last signs of the Doomsday the first would be the rising of the sun from the west, and after that *Dābbah* would come out. Out of the two signs whichever appears first, the Doomsday will follow soon. (Ibn Kathīr)

Shaikh Jalaluddin Maḥallī رحمه الله تعالى has said that after the appearance of *Dābbah* the obligation of inviting others to good deeds and forbidding them from the evils will cease to apply, and no infidel would convert to Islam after that. This statement is inferred from many *āḥādīth* and the statements of Ṣaḥābah. (Maẓharī). Ibn Kathīr has related many a things about the appearance and activities of *Dābbah*, most of which are not trustworthy. Therefore, only that much should be trusted and believed which is contained in the Qur’ān and authentic *āḥādīth*. Anything beyond that should be discarded, as it is neither of any value nor benefit.

As for the question as to what this *Dābbah* will converse with people, some commentators are of the view that it will communicate what is stated in the Qur’ān, that is *أَنَّ النَّاسَ كَانُوا بِآيَاتِنَا لَا يُوقِنُونَ* (that the human beings did not believe in Our verses). It will communicate the message on behalf of Allah Ta‘ālā that ‘Many did not believe Our verses before this’. It would mean that now the time has come that every one would believe, but then it would be too late, because it would not be acceptable then. Sayyidnā Ibn ‘Abbās ؓ, Ḥasan Al-Baṣrī, Qatādah رحمه الله تعالى, have reported, which is corroborated by a narration of Sayyidnā ‘Alī ؓ also, that the *Dābbah* will converse with people normally, as people do among themselves (Ibn Kathīr).

Verses 83 - 90

وَيَوْمَ نَحْشُرُ مِنْ كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ فَوْجًا مِمَّنْ يُكَذِّبُ بِآيَاتِنَا فَهُمْ يُوزَعُونَ
﴿٨٣﴾ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءَ وَقَالَ أَكْذَبْتُمْ بِآيَاتِي وَلَمْ تُحِطُوا بِهَا عِلْمًا أَمَّا

ذَاكُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٨٤﴾ وَوَقَعَ الْقَوْلُ عَلَيْهِمْ بِمَا ظَلَمُوا فَهُمْ
 لَا يَنْطِقُونَ ﴿٨٥﴾ أَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّا جَعَلْنَا اللَّيْلَ لَيْسَكُنُوا فِيهِ وَالنَّهَارَ
 مُبْصِرًا ۚ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٨٦﴾ وَيَوْمَ يُنْفَخُ فِي
 الصُّورِ فَفَزِعَ مَنْ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا مَنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ ۚ
 وَكُلُّ أَتَوِّهُ دَخِرِينَ ﴿٨٧﴾ وَتَرَى الْجِبَالَ تَحْسَبُهَا جَامِدَةً وَهِيَ تَمُرُّ
 مَرَّ السَّحَابِ ۚ صُنِعَ اللَّهُ الَّذِي أَتَقَنَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ ۚ إِنَّهُ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا
 تَفْعَلُونَ ﴿٨٨﴾ مَنْ جَاءَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ فَلَهُ خَيْرٌ مِنْهَا ۚ وَهُمْ مِمَّنْ فَزِعَ
 يَوْمَئِذٍ آمِنُونَ ﴿٨٩﴾ وَمَنْ جَاءَ بِالسَّيِّئَةِ فَكُبَّتْ وُجُوهُهُمْ فِي النَّارِ
 هَلْ تُجْزَوْنَ إِلَّا مَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٩٠﴾

And (remember) the day when We will gather from every nation a host of those who used to belie Our verses, and they will be kept under control. [83] Until when they will come, He (Allah) will say, "Did you belie My verses while you did not comprehend them with knowledge, or what was it that you used to do? [84] And the Word will come to fall on them because of their transgression, so they will not (be able to) speak. [85]

Did they not see that We made the night, so that they may have rest in it, and (made) the day to make them see? Surely, in this there are signs for a people who believe. [86] And (remember) the day when the Horn will be blown; so all those in the heavens and the earth will be in panic, except such as Allah wills. And All (of them) will come to Him in humility. [87] And you see the mountains (at present) taking them as fixed, while they will fly like the flight of clouds - an act of Allah who has perfected every thing. Surely, He is All-Aware of what you do. [88]

Whoever will come with the good deed will have (a reward) better than that, and such people will be immune on that day from any panic. [89] And whoever will come with evil deed, the faces of such people will

be thrown down into the Fire. You will not be recompensed but for what you used to do. [90]

Commentary

فَهُمْ يُوزَعُونَ (and they will be kept under control - 27:83). The word used here is derived from *Waz'*, which means to stop. The sense here is that the people in front will be stopped, so that those left behind could catch up. Some have taken the word *Waz'* in the sense of 'pushing'. Hence, it would mean that they would be pushed while being brought to their stand.

وَلَمْ تُحِيطُوا بِهَا عِلْمًا (while you did not comprehend them with knowledge - 27:84). There is an allusion in this verse that falsifying the message of Allah Ta'ālā is by itself a great sin, especially when one falsifies it without giving any consideration or thought, then the crime is doubled. This has brought to light that if an issue or subject is duly considered and thought over, and yet one could not get to the truth, in that situation the intensity of the crime is reduced. Nevertheless, the denial of the existence of Allah and His Oneness would not save any one from infidelity and adoption of the wrong path, and would thus lead to perpetual torment. It is because they are such self-evident matters that any mistake of judgment is not allowed in them.

وَيَوْمَ يُنْفَخُ فِي الصُّورِ فَفَزِعَ مَنْ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ (And [remember] the day when the Horn will be blown; so all those in the heavens and the earth will be in panic - 27:87). The word فَزِعَ '*faza*' means being nervous or perplexed. In another verse on the same subject the word فَزِعَ '*Fazi'a*' is substituted by صَعِقَ '*Ṣā'iqā*' which means losing consciousness. If both these verses are taken to refer to the first blowing of the Ṣūr (the Horn) then the total sum of the two words would be that, at the time of the blowing of the Ṣūr, every one will get nervous and perplexed initially, and then will lose consciousness, and ultimately will die. Qatādah and some other Imāms of *tafsīr* have taken this verse for the second blowing of the Ṣūr, when all the dead will resurrect. Thus the meaning of the verse would be that all the dead would get up perplexed. Some have interpreted that Ṣūr will be blown thrice. On the first blowing, every one will get nervous and perplexed, which is called 'the blowing of فَزِعَ '*faza*'. On the second blowing every one will die, which is 'the blowing of صَعِقَ '*Ṣa'āq*'. The third blowing will be the blowing for the resurrection, on which all dead will get up. But only two blowings are mentioned in the Qur'ān and Ṣaḥīḥ *āḥādīth*.

(Qurṭubī, Ibn Kathīr). Ibn Mubarak has quoted Ḥasan al-Baṣrī رحمه الله تعالى that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said that there will be a forty years gap in between the two blowings. (Qurṭubī)

إِلَّا مَنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ (except such as Allah wills - 27:87). This exception is from *Faza'*, which means panic and perplexity. The sense is that there will be people who will not be nervous at all at the time of resurrection. There is a *ḥadīth* reported by Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ؓ that these people would be the martyrs. At the time of second life on resurrection they will not get nervous. (This is a Ṣaḥīḥ *ḥadīth* according to Ibn al-'Arabī – Qurṭubī). Sayyidnā Sa'īd ibn Jubair ؓ has also said that the exception applies to the martyrs, who will assemble around the 'Arsh wearing their swords. Quashirī has observed that prophets are the very first included among them, because they have the status of martyrs also, and their position as prophet is still higher. (Qurṭubī)

The following verse will appear later in Sūrah Az-Zumar:

وَنُفِخَ فِي الصُّورِ فَصَبَقَ مَنْ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا مَنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ

For the Trumpet shall be blown and whosoever is in the heavens and whosoever is in the earth shall swoon, save whom Allah wills - 39:68.

This verse tells us that when the Horn will be blown, all those in the heavens and the earth will get unconscious, and then die. Here also an exception is made, which according to one *ḥadīth* is meant for six angels, namely Jibra'īl, Mik'a'il, Isrāfīl, Malakul-Maut and Ḥamalatul-'Arsh, who will not die by the blow of Ṣūr. Later, they will also die, as explained in the *ḥadīth*. Those who have held that *Faza'* and *Sa'aq* both relate to the same blowing, they have taken the exception, here as well, for the special angels, like Sūrah Az-Zumar. But those who have held that *Faza'* and *Ṣa'aq* relate to two different blowings, they interpret the exception in the present verse as referring to the martyrs, as explained above.

وَتَرَى الْجِبَالَ تَحْسَبُهَا جَامِدَةً وَهِيَ تَمُرُّ مَرَّ السَّحَابِ

And you see the mountains (at present) taking them as fixed, while they will fly like the flight of clouds - 27:88

The word تَرَى "tarā" in the beginning of this verse is used in Arabic for both present and future tense. Therefore, it can be translated as "You see"

or as "You will see". In the latter case, the verse would be referring to the mountains as they will appear on the Doomsday. The sense in that case will be that the mountains will be uprooted and blown like clouds, which though would appear stationary to the onlookers, but in reality will actually move swiftly. When huge bodies, whose beginning and end is not visible to the eyes, move in any direction, one does not perceive their movement, no matter how swiftly they move. They look like stationary objects, although they are moving. One could experience this while looking at a mass of cloud hanging overhead. One discovers their movement only when they move out so far away that a part of the sky is left bare towards the horizon. Based on this principle, the verse means that the mountains will seem, on the Doomsday, as if they are fixed, but it will be an illusion for an onlooker, because in reality they will be moving. Most of the commentators have interpreted this verse in this manner. The other interpretation is based on regarding the word "*tarā*" as a verb in the present tense and translating it as, "You see" instead of "You will see". In this case, the verse is referring to the present state of the mountains, as they look stationary, and an ordinary onlooker thinks that they will remain fixed forever and will never move from their place, but on the Doomsday they will be floating like clouds. This interpretation is adopted by Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thanawī (and on that basis the verse is translated above as "You see")

Some scholars have pointed out that different conditions are described in the Qur'ān about mountains on the Doomsday. The first condition is that of **إندكاك** Indkak and earthquake, which will envelop all the mountains of the world **إِذَا دُكَّتِ الْأَرْضُ دَكًّا** (When the earth is ground to powder-89:21) or **إِذَا زُلْزِلَتِ الْأَرْضُ زِلْزَالَهَا** (When the earth is shaken with a mighty shaking - 99:1). The second condition is that their big rocks will become like carded wool **وَتَكُونُ الْجِبَالُ كَالْعِهْنِ الْمَنْفُوشِ** (And the mountains shall be like plucked wool-tufts - 101:5). This will happen at the time when the sky will become like molten copper. Mountain rocks will go up like carded wool, and the skies will come down and meet them in the middle **يَوْمَ تَكُونُ السَّمَاءُ كَالْعِهْنِ** (Upon the day when heaven shall be as molten copper and the mountains shall be as plucked wool-tufts - 70:8-9). In the third condition the carded wool will no more remain a homogeneous body like rocks, but will turn into very fine particles **وَبُسَّتِ الْجِبَالُ بَسًّا فَكَانَتْ هَبًّا مُبْثًّا**

(and the mountains crumbled and become a dust scattered - 56:5-6). In the fourth condition, the fine particles of mountain rocks will get dispersed *فَقُلْ يُنْسِفُهَا رَبِّي نَسْفًا* (So, you say, "My Lord will blow them up totally (as dust) - 20:105). In the fifth condition, the fine particles of mountain rocks, which will engulf the land like cloud of dust will be driven up by the winds. This cloud of dust will cover up the whole world, and will appear stationary, although there will be swift movement in it like clouds *تَرَى الْجِبَالَ تَحْسِبُهَا جَامِدَةً وَهِيَ تَمُرُّ مَرَّ السَّحَابِ* (And you see the mountains (at present) taking them as fixed, while they will fly like the flight of clouds - 27:88). Some of these conditions will take place at the first blowing of the *Ṣūr*, and some after the second blowing, when the world will be made absolutely flat plain. There will be no caves or mountains left in the world, nor will there be any building or tree *فَقُلْ يُنْسِفُهَا رَبِّي نَسْفًا فَيَذَرُهَا قَاعًا صَفْصَفًا لَا تَرَى فِيهَا عِوَجًا وَلَا أَمْتًا* (20:105-107). (Qurṭubī, Rūḥ ul-Maʿānī)

صُنِعَ اللَّهُ الَّذِي أَتَقَنَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ

An act of Allah who has perfected every thing. - 27:88

Sun ' means skillful act, and *'itqān* ' means to make perfect and firm. Apparently this sentence is related to all the preceding subjects wherein Allah Taʿālā's omnipotence and marvelous creations are described, where the alteration of day and night is mentioned, and the blowing of *Ṣūr* and resulting conditions of the Doomsday are related. It is to emphasize that all these situations should not amaze and astonish any one, because their Creator is not a man or an angel having limited knowledge and power, but the Lord of all the worlds. But if this sentence is read as referring only to the adjacent preceding sentence *تَرَى الْجِبَالَ تَحْسِبُهَا جَامِدَةً* (And you see the mountains (at present) taking them as fixed - 27:88) then it would mean that the phenomenon about the mountains, that they look stationary, whereas in reality they are moving, is not something astonishing, because all these happenings are not beyond the power of Allah Taʿālā, who is All-Powerful.

مَنْ جَاءَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ فَلَهُ خَيْرٌ مِنْهَا

"Whoever will come with the good deed will have (a reward) better than that" - 27:89

This description relates to the situation that will take place after the

Doomsday and the account taking. Here the word *ḥasanah* is purported for the *kalimah* of لا إله إلا الله محمد رسول الله (as explained by Ibrāhīm) or it is an expression of sincerity (as interpreted by Qatādah). Some have interpreted this to include complete submission. The sense is that every good deed will be recompensed by a reward better than the deed; but it should be remembered that a person's righteous acts could be considered as righteous only when he fulfills its first condition of having faith in Allah Ta'ālā. Then he would get an award better than commensurable to his good deeds. It means that he would be graced with eternal bounties of the Paradise, and would escape from all troubles and torments for good. Some have interpreted that the word "better" means here that the reward of one good deed would be awarded from ten times to seven hundred times more. (Mazharī)

وَهُمْ مِنْ فَرَعٍ يَوْمَئِذٍ آمِنُونَ

and such people will be immune on that day from any panic -
27:89.

Word *Faza'* is purported here for any big calamity or perplexity. Thus the meaning of the sentence is that, while living in this world, every pious person is scared of his fate in the Hereafter, and as a matter of fact, he should be scared in the light of Qur'ānic verse إِنَّ عَذَابَ رَبِّهِمْ غَيْرُ مَأْمُونٍ (70:28). The torment of Allah is not something to be forgotten and set aside. It is for this reason that even the prophets, the companions, and saints were always frightened and daunted. But after the account taking on Doomsday those who would bring the *ḥasanah* (the good deed contemplated in this verse) with them would be free from all fear and grief, and will live forever in complete tranquility. (Only Allah knows best)

Verses 91 - 93

إِنَّمَا أَمِرتُ أَنْ أَعْبُدَ رَبَّ هَذِهِ الْبَلَدَةِ الَّذِي حَرَّمَهَا وَلَهُ كُلُّ شَيْءٍ
وَأَمِرتُ أَنْ أَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ ﴿٩١﴾ وَأَنْ أَتْلُوا الْقُرْآنَ ۚ فَمَنْ
اهْتَدَىٰ فَإِنَّمَا يَهْتَدِي لِنَفْسِهِ ۚ وَمَنْ ضَلَّ فَقُلْ إِنَّمَا أَنَا مِنَ الْمُنذِرِينَ
﴿٩٢﴾ وَقُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ سَيُرِيكُمْ آيَاتِهِ فَتَعْرِفُونَهَا ۚ وَمَا رَبُّكَ بِغَافِلٍ
عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٩٣﴾

I am but ordered to worship the Lord of this city which is sanctified by Him. And to Him belongs every thing, and I am ordered to be one of the Muslims (who submit themselves to Allah), [91] and to recite the Qur'ān; so whoever takes the right path, takes it for his own benefit. As for the one who goes astray, say (to him), "I am only one of the warners." [92] And say, "Praise belongs to Allah. He will show you His sign, then you will recognize them." And your Lord is not unaware of what you do. [93]

Commentary

رَبِّ هَذِهِ الْبَلَدَةِ (the Lord of this city - 27:91). Majority of the commentators have taken the word بَلَدَةٌ "Baldah" (the city) for Makkah. Allah Ta'ālā is the Lord of all the worlds and the Lord of heavens and earth. Therefore, the particular mention of Makkah here is to show its revered splendor, and its respect and honour in the sight of Allah Ta'ālā. Word Ḥaram is derived from Tahrim, which means "to prohibit" and also means "complete respect and veneration", and because of this respect and veneration whatever special religious prohibitions are applicable to Makkah and its surrounding land are also included in it. For instance, whoever takes refuge in Ḥaram is secured. It is not allowed to kill or take revenge from any one in the Ḥaram. Even hunting of animals and cutting of trees is not permitted in the precincts of Ḥaram. These restrictions are enjoined in the verse كَانَ آمِنًا (and whoever enters there is secure - 3:97), while some of them have appeared in the beginning of Sūrah Mā'idah. In addition, verse لَا تَقْتُلُوا الصَّيْدَ وَأَنْتُمْ حُرُمٌ (do not kill game when, you are in Iḥrām - 5:95) also includes this subject.

الحمد لله Today on Shawwal 24, 1391 Hijrah the commentary of Sūrah An-Naml is complete. The Indian army has unleashed full-scale war against Pakistan since Shawwal 14, and its aeroplanes are pounding Karachi heavily. Bombs are being dropped regularly every night on civil population as well. There is a complete blackout at nights. The houses get jolted with the explosion of the bombs. But by the grace of Allah there was no break in the writing of this commentary. During the last ten days of war twenty pages of the commentary were written.

Alḥamdulillāh
The Commentary on
Sūrah An-Naml
Ends here.